United Nations A/73/PV.11

General Assembly
Seventy-third session

Official Records

11th plenary meeting
Thursday, 27 September 2018, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Ms. Espinosa Garcés. . . . . (Ecuador)

The meeting was called to order at 4.05 p.m.

Address by Mr. Peter Christian, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Mr. Peter Christian, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Peter Christian, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Christian: The two speakers whom the Assembly heard this afternoon immediately before me have said it all for me and my country (see A/73/PV.10). The fact is that I do not have to say a word here, because they said it so well. But I am bound by duty to my country to say a few words in order to justify the cost of my trip to New York. I know that everyone is tired, and I know that it is afternoon, but I ask the Assembly to bear with me.

The Organization needs good leadership, and I am sure that you will take us in the right direction, Madam President. I offer my congratulations to you and to the people of Ecuador on your election to lead us during this session of the General Assembly.

As I said before, New Zealand has spoken eloquently about the fate of the Pacific island countries in the face of the imminent threat of climate change.

When the armed conflicts that dominated the world in the first four decades of the previous century ended, the world slipped into another war, the Cold War. It was a period of suspicion and deceit, an era deeply rooted in clandestine engagement that reminds us of what Winston Churchill once said: "[T]ruth is so precious she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies." That resonates with us today, given the various applications of that term. We see the fight continuing today, but it is now waged between the bigger and richer nations, armed with the might of wealth and guided by the principle and the notion that might makes right. The smaller economies are now aligned and marginalized, once again becoming the spoils of what is now an economic war fostering new, economic colonies. As in all wars, many people become innocent victims and are often filed away simply as collateral damage or spoils of war, becoming the possessions of the victors and allies.

We are opening another session of the General Assembly with our world facing record and serious challenges. And yet, we dared to ask ourselves this morning whether Pluto was a planet. How is that relevant to what we face today in the world? Perhaps Pluto can wait.

Our aim today must be to improve upon the United Nations as the forum in which we work to prevent all

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

18-30073 (E)

Accessible document Please recycle

this from continuing. We must seek curative measures to slow and, if possible, stop the economic war, hopefully with the goal of accelerating efforts to close the gap of economic imbalance. We must also avoid deliberate procrastination motivated by geopolitical greed for dominance and economic imperialism. Such a state only brings pain and misery to those whose only fault is to be in the way. We must recommend what the future should hold for us.

We the Members of the United Nations must adopt a more progressive attitude towards taking charge of our own affairs and making sure that we are directly involved in matters that touch and impact our lives. The existential threat of climate change is becoming more real with every hurricane, wildfire, heatwave and centimetre of sea-level rise. Those are the realities that many of us are seeing and experiencing. Islands within the Federated States, islands in Marshall Islands, and islands in Tuvalu and Kiribati will be among the first to literally disappear.

In 2009, Micronesia proposed a fast-action strategy using the Montreal Protocol to explicitly cut climate emissions so as to avoid a warming of 1.5°C by the end of the century. While it may sound like a small figure, it is 50 per cent more than the warming that we are experiencing today. In order to achieve that goal, we urge all countries that have not yet done so to ratify the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol. I ask all my friends, leaders of their countries, from the bottom of my heart to accelerate the process to join the Montreal Protocol so that we can begin the implementation of what needs to be done in order to save this planet.

On our current trajectory, many more islands will be lost, many homes will be destroyed and many people will be displaced. But we can still avoid the worst climate impacts if we recognize the need for speed and take fast action. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change may have shortcomings, but believe me, it is the best platform for achieving our goal. We believe that, no matter how difficult or sensitive the issues associated with climate change, we need everyone on board. My country is disappointed that some countries are considering withdrawing from the Agreement, and we call on them to reconsider.

Micronesia is a large ocean State blessed with abundant marine resources. A key concern for Micronesia — and all small island developing States — is rightly focused on ensuring a healthy, productive and resilient ocean. The resources of the ocean are the bedrock of the Micronesian nations and livelihoods. A sizeable percentage of our economies comes from our ocean-based activities, whether fisheries, tourism or maritime transport.

Micronesia is committed to the Pacific Islands Forum leaders' declaration aimed at safeguarding the ocean and its resources. I join my fellow Pacific leaders as we commit to eliminating marine litter and recommend the urgent implementation of the Pacific marine litter action plan. For Micronesia, our fisheries are critical to the socioeconomic well-being of our people.

While we welcome the recent decision by the International Law Commission to place the topic "Sea-Level Rise in Relation to International Law" on its long-term programme of work, may I strongly recommend that the subject be placed on the Commission's active programme of work, given the direct implications of sea-level rise on maritime baselines and maritime boundaries.

The wish for peace is global; it should have no boundaries. Micronesia is encouraged by the peace reached by Eritrea and Ethiopia, and we wish the people of those countries the very best. I think that it is time that we congratulate those countries on achieving that wonderful result. We also hope that other countries that are engaged in conflicts achieve similar resolutions, and soon.

In our region of the world, we have a stake in the ongoing peace negotiations between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea. We recognize and encourage the continuing efforts to bring peace and stability to the Korean peninsula. A lasting peace on the peninsula translates into a more secure and stable Pacific region.

Elsewhere in the world, we cannot ignore the pain and suffering of the many people caught in pockets of armed conflict. As world leaders, we have fallen short in our efforts to fulfil our responsibilities. It is deeply troubling to see those who wield tremendous power fail to take bold and decisive actions to end such serious atrocities. We wonder if, for some unknown reason, such conflicts might be good for those powerful States, either politically or even economically — what a shame if they were to think so.

The United Nations needs to be relevant and able and willing to deal with emerging threats. We find it deeply troubling that the threat posed by climate change to our existence has not received the Security Council's consideration. The Pacific small island developing States have made a proposal for consideration by the Council. While the proposal itself will not immediately save our islands, it is nevertheless a step in the right direction. I happen to feel that if Micronesia were a member of the Security Council, we would do a lot better than some of the current ones. Micronesia believes that a Security Council, as conceived in this century, needs to become more efficient, more representative and more responsive and must show greater leadership in its response to today's challenges.

Micronesia welcomes the Secretary-General's objective to reposition the United Nations development system in order to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The United Nations development system has impact and influence when it is focused. It is of the utmost importance that its operational activities for development take into account the need to build, promote and strengthen the capacities of small island developing countries.

For Micronesia, the role of the United Nations development system — and particularly the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) — to support and enhance the capacity of island countries to implement the 2030 Agenda must not be overlooked. However, that requires the scaling up of the UNDP presence, particularly in our North Pacific, where that presence can make a real difference and be a crucial factor in our development efforts.

In closing, the United Nations represents the best hope for humankind, and we, the Member States, must ensure that it remains so.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Peter Christian, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. José Mário Vaz, President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. José Mário Vaz, President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. José Mário Vaz, President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Vaz (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): First of all, I would like to say a few words to Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés and congratulate her on her election as the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I assure you, Madam President, that you can count on the full cooperation of my country, Guinea-Bissau, in performing your important duties. I would also like to thank your predecessor, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, for his excellent work during his term.

Furthermore, I would like to highlight the work of our current Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, in particular his innovative leadership of the Secretariat and the new momentum that he has instilled in the Organization to better face global challenges and strengthen multilateralism. His vision of the Organization's unifying role in affirming and applying the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the collective responsibility of every Member State for the establishment of lasting global peace strengthen our conviction that, under his leadership, the United Nations will be better prepared for and more capable of contributing to the advent of a more just and equitable world in the coming years.

On 24 September we celebrated the 100th birthday of President Nelson Mandela — Madiba — and had the opportunity to reflect on the life and accomplishments of that great humanist (see A/73/PV.5). The late former South African President was an example of courage, abnegation and tolerance. Mandela fought for freedom, justice, democracy and a society in which all people might live together as equals in harmony. That is a great lesson that will continue to serve as a source of inspiration for us and future generations.

In his latest report on the work of the Organization (A/73/1), the Secretary-General reminds us that, for many peoples, peace remains a difficult goal to achieve. As our much-missed former Secretary-General, the late Kofi Annan, said, peace is a suspended dream. Many conflicts persist around the world, and many people continue to suffer the destruction brought on by war, Many have been killed, including children. Millions of people have been forced to abandon their homes and their cities, leaving behind their families and the possessions they acquired through a lifetime of work, in search of asylum. We cannot remain indifferent to the suffering and despair of the thousands of people, including children, seeking protection and asylum, particularly in Europe.

The situation in Palestine, as well as in Yemen and Syria, continues to be a source of great concern for the international community. On the African continent, internal tensions caused by the activities of terrorist groups persist, particularly in the Sahel, spreading fear among populations and preventing their Governments from focusing on development and on creating the best possible living conditions for their citizens.

Climate change has caused an increasing number of severe droughts and floods in many parts of the world. Many island countries face the risk of disappearing, owing to rising sea levels. Those challenges require greater efforts, new attitudes and increasingly responsible behaviour on the part of all of us. Above all, we must rigorously meet the commitments stipulated in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

I believe that we all have an obligation under the Charter, to which we all subscribe, and that we must respect it regardless of the circumstances, because the principles enshrined therein are the foundation and basis for a rules-based world order. Specifically, the principle of the peaceful resolution of disputes, non-interference in the internal affairs of States and multilateralism are the cornerstone for building international peace and security. We live in a global village in which we all are responsible not only for what happens within our own territories, but, given the interdependence of countries, one country's national policies may gravely affect many other countries. That requires shared responsibility. In that regard, I would be remiss if I did not address the issue of Security Council reform, particularly with regard to the increased representation of the African continent, which would enhance the legitimacy of that principal United Nations organ.

I would like to take this opportunity to briefly update the Assembly on the current political situation in Guinea-Bissau, as well as the results achieved. Last April, in Lomé, Togo, within the framework of an extraordinary summit convened by the Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States, we reached an important decision aimed at permanently overcoming the political and constitutional impasse that has prevailed in my country for more than three years. As Head of State and in order to build peace and stability in my country and the subregion, I have sought to implement the recommendations that resulted from the summit, namely, the appointment of a consensus Prime Minister and the scheduling of a date for holding legislative elections, namely, 18 November. Those recommendations have been fully implemented, with the following results: the formation of a Government of inclusion in accordance with the Conakry Agreement; the reopening of our National People's Assembly; the extension of the terms of Assembly members; the election of the members of the National Electoral Commission; and the approval of the Government programme and the general State budget.

Recent political, social, and economic events bear witness to the fact that the people of Guinea-Bissau, together with our armed forces, said "no" to instability and embarked upon a path of peace and development. The process for the holding of our elections on 18 November is under way, and we began registering voters on 19 September, despite delays due to technical and financial issues. Please note that, for the first time in the history of our democracy, a legislative session has been completed without any interruptions caused by coups d'état or other incidents. Accordingly, on 30 August, the Security Council noted (see S/PV.8337) the positive developments concerning the political stability in our country. I also note that in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/771), as in his previous reports, we were commended on the republican attitudes of the armed forces, which have displayed a notable sense of civic duty in recent years. In the name of justice and national harmony, I take this opportunity to appeal to the international community and to the members of the Security Council, of which sanctions are the exclusive prerogative, to lift the sanctions imposed on officials of our armed forces. That long-anticipated decision would certainly help consolidate our democratic institutions and bring about lasting peace in our country.

Peace is essential for successful development, but peace is not just the absence of armed conflict. There can be no peace when a large portion, if not the majority, of the population, particularly women and youth, are not sufficiently valued; when their education is considered less important; when their contribution to the economic growth of our country is not recognized or fairly compensated; or when women are not on par with men in positions of influence and are ignored as the pillar of society. We recently took significant steps in my country towards ensuring equal representation for men and women. The Parliament of Guinea-Bissau adopted a law that guarantees a minimum representation quota of 36 per cent for women in high-profile positions, particularly in the National People's Assembly and the Government. As President of the Republic and guarantor of national equity and unity, I am particularly pleased by and grateful for those national advances.

I would like to conclude my remarks by reaffirming Guinea-Bissau's commitment to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and to the important, unique and irreplaceable role played by the Organization. We must join forces to better manage globalization, eradicate poverty and hunger, and combat major endemic diseases, as well as to ensure education and the provision of potable water for all in order to implement the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Let us stand in solidarity and demonstrate our compassion for those who are fleeing persecution, war and misery, particularly migrants and refugees who are victims of political crises and natural catastrophes and are desperately knocking on our doors. In a solidary and brotherly world, we will be in a better position to build a better future for future generations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Guinea-Bissau for the statement he has just made.

Mr. José Mário Vaz, President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Azali Assoumani, President of the Union of the Comoros

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The General Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Union of the Comoros.

Mr. Azali Assoumani, President of the Union of the Comoros, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Azali Assoumani, President of the Union of the Comoros, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Assoumani (*spoke in French*): First, I extend my warm congratulations to you, Madam President, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. Your election as the fourth woman to be elected to lead the Assembly represents a further step towards the better representation of women within our Organization, and I am convinced that the breadth of your well-grounded experience will benefit our work and provide the energy needed to move forward more effectively towards the achievement of our goals. I am exceptionally pleased that my Government has made the advancement of women one of its priorities. I would also like to take this opportunity to commend and thank your predecessor upon the completion of his term; he deserves my delegation's gratitude for his remarkable commitment during the previous session of the General Assembly.

The year 2018 has seen upheavals, transitions, changes and many instances of disorder in manifold forms, in the face of which we must continue to show our resolve and unity. Whether climatic, economic, social, political, migratory, health-related or other in nature, those events must further mobilize the international community, which must become more solidary, committed and determined than ever. The current international context is increasingly demanding and requires that we react virtually immediately. The involvement of us all is therefore essential, given that all those situations can compromise peace and stability. That is what genuinely confers upon the United Nations its universality.

The theme chosen for the seventy-third session — "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies" — will make sense only if we translate our words into action. Today there is a need for shared responsibility. In order to meet all the challenges we face, we must begin by making the Organization more equitable and

effective by providing it with the resources necessary to accomplish its mission.

To that end, the much-desired reforms, particularly within the main organs of the United Nations — which, when delayed, give rise to a sense of injustice and frustration among the regions that feel least represented — must be concrete in order to reflect, as closely and in the most balanced way possible, the current geopolitical realities, especially the recognition of the African continent. In that regard, the Union of the Comoros reiterates its support for the Ezulwini Consensus, which calls for the allocation of at least two permanent seats to Africa in the Security Council, with veto power.

By having equal opportunities to invest in the areas of peace and security, health, education, democracy and the rule of law, we will succeed in ensuring the harmonious development of our countries and in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the founding objective of the new era in which the Organization is entering.

My country also welcomes the relevance of the Secretary-General's proposals as part of the reforms he is undertaking, which will better reflect the priorities and needs of countries and improve the functioning of the Organization. On the other hand, that rationale must in no way decrease the presence of the United Nations on the ground. It is therefore important to stress that care must be taken to ensure that funding is predictable and that the poorest countries, in particular small island developing States, do not assume too great of a financial burden.

I would like to welcome the initiative taken by the Assembly to attach particular importance to the consideration of topics relating to tuberculosis and non-communicable diseases. Need I remind those present that some of those diseases are no longer the prerogative of the poorest countries, in the sense that they are reappearing in the more affluent countries? We must strengthen the World Health Organization's work in the world, including by making substantial resources available to the agency. At the country level, we must assign importance to those problems and adopt appropriate and effective strategies to combat those diseases.

The situation in the Middle East is extremely worrisome. Yemen, Syria and Palestine need the Organization's unwavering support. In that regard, I would like to express the deep concern of my Government and of the Comorian people over the increase in arbitrary measures taken in recent months against the Palestinian people, the consequences of which not only significantly undermine the stability of the region but also weaken the collective effort towards a two-State solution.

That is why the Union of the Comoros reiterates its steadfast support for the Palestinian people and remains convinced that any viable solution to that conflict must involve the creation of both an Israeli and a Palestinian State, living side by side, in complete security, within secure and internationally recognized borders, on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as Palestine's capital.

However, our concern is all the more justified as we note that, unfortunately, the international community has gradually become a spectator of that peace process, which is stuck in a persistent stalemate that is likely to decrease the prospects for a just and lasting resolution. In view of recent events and positions, Member States must spend some time in reflection so as to reach consensus on developing a new mediation mechanism to finally relaunch the peace process.

In that regard, I welcome the adoption, in December 2017, of resolution ES-10/19, on the status of Jerusalem, as well as resolution ES-10/20, on the protection of the Palestinian people, which was adopted in June by a majority of Member States and requests that the Secretary-General submit proposals to ensure the security, protection and well-being of the Palestinian population, in addition to recommendations on an international protection mechanism for Palestinian civilians.

In that vein, allow me to draw the attention of the members of the Assembly to the difficult situation that the Rohingya people continue to face. That innocent population is the target of attacks and persecutions that contravene the values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. To that end, I would like to make a solemn appeal to the Assembly to assume its responsibilities in order to help that population, which is in great danger.

With regard to the question of Western Sahara, while we welcome the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 2414 (2018), which stresses the need to work towards a pragmatic, realistic and lasting political solution and calls on neighbouring States to cooperate

fully with the United Nations, the Union of the Comoros wishes to express its thanks to the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy for succeeding in relaunching the political process on the basis of the parameters defined by the Security Council since 2007. The Union of the Comoros welcomes the serious and creditable efforts of the Kingdom of Morocco to find a definitive political solution and supports the Moroccan initiative for autonomy.

Building international peace and security is a constant struggle and the result of many concessions. In the current context, the risks of a nuclear detonation are very real. We have a duty to protect present and future generations from the danger of the use of nuclear weapons.

The terrorist threat also continues to grow worldwide, and no country has been spared. Indeed, not a day goes by without there being victims somewhere in the world, owing to the madness of certain malicious people who use ideologies of all kinds to achieve their extremist ends and commit acts of unspeakable barbarity. Some say that they are acting in the name of Islam. That is entirely wrong. What Islam are they referring to? Islam, our Islam, is a religion of peace and tolerance. It is therefore urgent to work together to strengthen mobilization efforts, in particular through information-sharing and the transfer of skills, to be able to effectively stamp out that threat.

To that end, sustained efforts must continue to be made with a view to achieving a common consensual language, which, beyond defining the various aspects of the terrorism spectrum, will enable the establishment of cooperation processes and action aimed at reducing the threat of terrorism at the national, regional and global levels. We must therefore support the Group of Five for the Sahel, the United Nations forces and Operation Barkhane in their joint efforts to fight terrorism in the Sahel region.

Since it is equally necessary to find prompt and urgent solutions to the many situations of injustice that persist in the world, we must give priority to exchanges and do more to prevent such situations from arising. Why should we not become more involved in finding ways and means to deal with sensitive issues, such as migration, with humanity and celerity?

In that regard, the Union of the Comoros, through the coordination of the Group of African States, contributed to the negotiations on the landmark document promoting the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, the first document offering a 360-degree perspective on migration governance and the first internationally recognized normative and regulatory framework in the area of migration governance.

The global compact reiterates our commitment to addressing socioeconomic causes and determinants, including through international cooperation, as well as our obligation to protect the human rights of migrants and promote the fight against all forms of racism and discrimination against them. Among other things, the compact advocates voluntary migration and recognizes the positive contribution of migrants and diasporas to sustainable development in countries of origin, transit and destination.

In order to ensure a safer world, we must also pay close attention to the ever-growing issue of climate change, particularly in small island developing States, of which my country, the Union of the Comoros, is one. While exacerbating the destruction of ecosystems and biodiversity, climate change is also likely to increase poverty and various diseases and lead to an upsurge in climate-related migration, thereby compromising our future and that of future generations.

At the national level, major events marking a decisive turning point in the sociopolitical evolution of my country have taken place this year that merit being brought to the attention of the Assembly. As I announced in my statement at the United Nations last year (see A/72/PV.13), we held a national conference in February of this year to take stock of the 42 years of independence of the Union of the Comoros. That civil-society-driven initiative benefited not only from the support of the Government but also from the multifaceted support of development partners and many regional and international organizations, including the African Union, the League of Arab States, the International Organization of la Francophonie and the United Nations.

I would like to reiterate my sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for sending senior officials to the opening and closing of the conference. The conclusions drawn from that national forum highlighted the need to redefine and redesign a new institutional framework that would, while consolidating national unity, pave the way for the emergence of a new Comoros by 2030. A

referendum was held on 30 July, and a new Constitution was adopted.

In full support of that reform process willed by the Comorian people, I have decided to shorten my term of office and to prepare, under the new Constitution and the established deadlines, early regional and national elections. In that connection, I solemnly appeal to our development partners and all the countries that are friends of the Comoros to support us in meeting that new challenge of the future. I remain confident that, as usual, their valuable support will be be forthcoming to ensure that future elections will be conducted in peace, harmony and transparency.

With regard to the Comorian island of Mayotte, popular uprisings there in March led the authorities on that island to massively expel Comorians from the other three islands who were residing on Mayotte. The conditions of their refoulement forced my Government to oppose that unilateral decision, especially since many of those people are adolescents who have become street children since their families were driven out of Mayotte under the same conditions that we denounce today. Since their parents' refoulement from Mayotte without any care, those abandoned children pose a real threat today not only to the island but also to the rest of the archipelago, and even to the whole region.

The misunderstanding between France and the Union of the Comoros originates from that situation, which is compounded by the shock felt by the Comorians of the other three islands at seeing the difficult conditions of detention of their fellow citizens on Mayotte. The Government is committed to engaging in dialogue with France to resolve everything that puts us at odds, or has the potential to do so. We are a peaceful country by nature, despite the many bumps that have marked our shared history. We have historical and cultural links with France. For that reason, we are determined to move forward towards a successful and just solution to that problem.

From this rostrum, I would like to pay warm tribute to the people of the Comoros as a whole for the unanimity and solidarity they have shown in relation to the Government's position in that new twist on the Mayotte issue. We have utilized active, measured and effective diplomacy to take due account of all the dimensions of the issue. I welcome the commitment of Comorians, alongside the Government, which is making every effort to ensure that, together with France, we can resolve the current unfortunate situation on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

To close that chapter, I trust that, together with France's top officials, we can find a lasting solution to that very troublesome dispute between partners, which has lasted far too long for two countries that should be united by many factors, as confirmed by the late French President François Mitterrand.

On that question, as on the others that are the subject of our debate here, our responsibility is to provide answers, because in the Indian Ocean, Africa and throughout the world our duty is to leave future generations with a world of peace, stability and sustainable development. I want to believe that we can do it.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Union of the Comoros for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Azali Assoumani, President of the Union of the Comoros, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Rivo Rakotovao, President ad interim of the Republic of Madagascar

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President ad interim of the Republic of Madagascar.

Mr. Rivo Rakotovao, President ad interim of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Rivo Rakotovao, Interim President of the Republic of Madagascar, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rakotovao (*spoke in French*): If I have the privilege and honour to speak today on behalf of the Malagasy people before the General Assembly, it is because Madagascar has gone through a period of exceptional democratic success, which has been warmly welcomed by many observers and seen as "real democratic progress", to use the words said on that occasion. I will come back to that later.

I extend to you, Madam President, my sincere congratulations on your election. I am confident that your

determination will give new impetus to our collective efforts to consolidate our Organization with a view to making it even more credible and closer to our peoples and capable of effecting real change in their daily lives, because that is its mission. We have also heard your call and that of the Secretary-General for the strengthening of multilateralism and international cooperation in the current difficult context of fragmentation, polarization and withdrawal. Be assured that Madagascar will actively support you throughout your mandate.

Madagascar, strongly committed to the values of unity, fraternity and peace advocated by the United Nations, intends, like all of us here who are striving to promote the welfare of our peoples, to contribute to the most representative and democratic platform for global exchange, namely, the General Assembly. All the speakers who have taken the floor in succession have highlighted the transformations taking place in the world, characterized by multipolarization, increasing economic globalization, the frenetic pace of the computerization of society and broad cultural diversity.

Much progress has been made but, as the Secretary-General has again pointed out, our world suffers from a lack of trust, the reconsideration of policies and a very strong sense of insecurity — feelings that are exacerbated by inequalities in development and the surge in global challenges that have not yet been mastered, such as climate change and terrorism, not to mention the iniquitous severity of poverty and disease. We are all witnessing humanitarian crises caused by conflicts affecting millions of people, including migration crises, terrorist attacks and security threats in certain regions, to name but a few.

The theme chosen for this session places us at the heart of the major issues that drive the world today. It challenges us with regard to the role of the Organization in the face of the disruptions that are undermining our societies today. The challenge of sustainable development and the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development require a strong and effective Organization that engages all Member States.

The world is changing and evolving. That requires the Organization to adapt to it in order to bring about greater coherence in its approaches and responses. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a sure way not only to establish development but also to fight inequality and guarantee human rights, with a view to promoting social inclusion, a sine qua non condition for lasting peace.

Sustainable development, to which we aspire, must necessarily involve the preservation of the environment, which must be a priority if we are to more effectively eradicate extreme poverty and ensure the sustainability and viability of our planet. In that context, I welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to convene a summit on climate change next year, and I hope that special attention will be paid to developing countries, particularly the least developed countries and small island States, so that they can adapt their economic development processes to evolving environmental hazards.

In this day and age, advocacy for women and girls cannot be ignored. We cannot turn a blind eye to the deplorable conditions in which many women around the world live, not to mention the many forms of gender-based violence. Girls and women remain at the heart of the future of humankind. There is therefore a need to condemn with one voice the injustices of modern slavery, trafficking in persons and the worst forms of child labour, which particularly affect women and girls. Let us give ourselves the means to improve the fate of humankind by looking after our mothers, sisters and daughters, to whom we must grant an equitable sharing of responsibilities.

It is also essential to act in the area of global health, which has an impact on the achievement of the SDGs, especially in Africa. Madagascar can attest to that. The obstacles have been numerous and difficult — I would just mention the improvement of access to treatment and medicines and the specific commitment of all communities, especially in terms of prevention and investment. But it is necessary to persevere, and, with the support of our partners, a universal health coverage system has been implemented. With the support of the entire United Nations family, Madagascar was declared polio-free this year.

The 2030 Agenda is a multisectoral programme for inclusive, equitable and sustainable development that seeks not to exclude any segment of the population. However, such a programme will remain a dead letter if it is not given the institutional and financial resources necessary to achieve its objectives. In that regard, Madagascar fully supports the reforms undertaken by the Secretary-General and the Secretariat. Those reforms are certainly very ambitious, but we are

counting on the active involvement of Member States for their implementation.

With regard to resolution 72/279, entitled "Repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system", Madagascar welcomes the consensus that led to the adoption of that resolution in May. We also welcome the reforms undertaken at the country team level and the role of the Resident Coordinators of the United Nations system. The resolution points the way forward so that, in full consultation with, and by the mutual agreement of, Governments the system can align more quickly with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. That will ensure that better account is taken of the realities, needs and priorities of Member States so that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda programme truly benefits the populations.

In that context, the accelerators of Madagascar's development process for achieving the SDGs were identified after implementing the mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support strategy at the end of April. The third general population and housing census of Madagascar was just completed, with the support of the United Nations system and other partners, such as the European Union. The results will provide important insights into population dynamics and development, as well as the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs. They will be taken into account when we begin to draft our next national development plan, for the period 2020-2024.

The ultimate goal of the United Nations system is to maintain lasting peace for development in the world. Considerable and commendable achievements attest to the progress achieved, but we must admit that much remains to be done given the persistent challenges facing the world and the unsatisfied aspirations. A world of peace and prosperity cannot be built by the isolated action of a single organization or a few individuals, communities or groups of States. It requires the implementation of convergent and consensual actions determined by the aspirations of each party.

Although most countries are recognized as democracies worldwide, the option of democratic governance is still one of the contemporary political concepts that does not always enjoy unanimous support among nations. The Malagasy people, for their part, have always shown a particular interest in joint actions to safeguard democratic achievements. They have always been of the conviction that progress in democracy ensures the stability that is essential for development and is a precondition for international cooperation. We are reminded of that when we look at the historic step our country is taking in its ongoing quest for achieving mature democracy. Madagascar is today at a crossroads.

Under our Constitution, the presidential term is to be shortened by a few months if the incumbent President runs for his own succession. In that purer spirit of a republic, the President of the Malagasy Republic, His Excellency Mr. Hery Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana, who was democratically elected in 2013, submitted his resignation on 7 September, thereby upholding a constitutional requirement that is certainly unusual but was felt to be necessary by the Malagasy people at a particular moment in their history.

For the first time, the constitutional provisions prescribing the transfer of presidential powers to the President of the Senate were implemented without any other process. The latter will therefore be responsible for ensuring the continuity of the State and the regular functioning of public services until the arrival of a new President of the Republic, whose inauguration is already scheduled for 25 January 2019. That task will include ensuring that the ongoing electoral process is properly conducted.

It is important to note in that respect that Madagascar is not in a phase of political transition in the sense usually understood when political divides lead to a suspension of the Constitution. On the contrary, in the present case we have simply submitted to the expression of the will of the sovereign people that is inscribed in the Constitution. The situation is part of the continuity of our national political life and is certainly marked by a brief stage prescribed by fundamental sovereign law itself.

The former Secretary-General, the late Kofi Annan, said that no nation is born democratic. The situation in our country today shows a clear desire to consolidate progress towards democracy. In parallel with that key phase in our democracy, which is underpinned by a will for peace that seeks to maintain political stability at all costs, we have over the past four years been able to restore macroeconomic balance. We have seen positive changes in our basic indicators. We have

restored confidence and relations between national and international stakeholders, and we can therefore look forward to an economic growth rate that is expected to exceed 5 per cent this year, which will be the best performance in 10 years.

Mr. Santos Maraver (Spain), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In the agricultural sector, which involves 80 per cent of the population, we have seen an increase in production and productivity, particularly in rice, thanks to public and private investment in hydro-agricultural infrastructure and research in improved and adapted seeds, as well as new practices and techniques.

With respect to energy, Madagascar is going through a period of energy transition. We have seen a significant increase in clean and renewable energy, especially in the form of hydroelectric power plants and photovoltaic power plants, to mention only what has just been handed over to the people of Ambatolampy and Ambohipihaonana in June. I am quite proud to say that it is the largest power plant of its kind in the Indian Ocean region and among the largest in sub-Saharan Africa. Madagascar can reasonably expect a reduction in the cost of electricity by 2020 as a result of that type of project, despite the increase in the price of oil on the international market.

Exports have also performed well. The foreign exchange market has been under control, and inflation may decrease to 7 per cent by the end of the year.

In the social sector, education and health have improved significantly. Since 2014, we have built 24 centres for accelerating the reduction of maternal and child mortality and 315 basic health-care centres. The national radiotherapy centre will soon be completed to treat cancers. We have also set up 30 operating rooms in hard-to-reach areas.

With regard to education, we have been able to recruit 44,000 new teachers since 2015, representing a 30 per cent increase in the total number of teachers. We have also built 1,087 classrooms and have fed more than 354,100 students in school cafeterias. The same improvement was recorded in the tourism sector, particularly in airport infrastructure and reception buildings. In the interest of good governance, we have adopted several laws to fight corruption and the illicit trafficking in our resources. The structural reform programme is well under way, including the implementation of the anti-corruption programme.

In short, all those data points are indicators of stability and reveal growth that deserves support and consolidation. But despite all those efforts and despite the potential of the country, Madagascar is still undergoing hardship. We are aware of the need for stability, which is the guarantee of development. The country cannot be held hostage to a political crisis any longer. The people understand that, given the fact that the country has suffered so much.

The example had to come from the top. That is why President Rajaonarimampianina willingly complied with the constitutional provisions by submitting his resignation. Madagascar is therefore seeking support from all of its development partners for the electoral process currently under way, the outcome of which is a source of hope for the Malagasy people. I also take this opportunity to reiterate the call to all to foster effective synergy within the Organization to promote the building of a better future, for which all nations have a right to hope.

Before concluding, I join my predecessors in paying tribute to a worthy son of our continent, our former Secretary-General the late Kofi Atta Annan. On the strength of his convictions, that fervent defender of multilateralism worked to rethink and build a stronger Organization that is better able to alleviate the ills of many people around the world in the name of humankind. He will undoubtedly remain a source of inspiration for all.

Finally, I would like to conclude by recalling that this year marks the seventieth anniversary of the adoption of the instrument that has best served humankind: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. May it continue to inspire and guide us in the struggles that still lie ahead of us for a new world order where no one will ever again be left behind. May God keep us.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President ad interim of the Republic of Madagascar for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Rivo Rakotovao, President ad interim of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Muhammad Jusuf Kalla, Vice-President of the Republic of Indonesia

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Indonesia.

Mr. Muhammad Jusuf Kalla, Vice-President of the Republic of Indonesia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Muhammad Jusuf Kalla, Vice-President of the Republic of Indonesia, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Kalla (Indonesia): I join others in congratulating Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. She may rest assured that Indonesia will give her its full support for the success of her presidency. I also wish to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his success in guiding the Assembly at its seventy-second session.

Let me also express our deepest sympathy and condolences on the passing of former Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The world has lost a great peacemaker and true humanist. We will always remember his legacy.

The world continues to face complex global challenges, where instabilities and conflicts are still rampant. Extreme poverty and inequalities linger. Zero-sum thinking and narrow nationalism often prevail. Furthermore, violations of human rights and democratic values remain day-to-day problems in our lives. at times like these, we often look in vain to leadership to show great strength, indeed to wield superhero-like powers.

However, the world does not need to look for superheroes; we do not need to call on the strength of the Avengers or that of the Justice League. We in this Hall are global leaders. Collectively, we have the strength of superheroes. What we must do now is harness our own individual wills, courage, strength, compassion, selflessness and humility. This is the very essence of the United Nations, where we all believe in the strength and power of the mantra contained in the Charter of the United Nations, "We the peoples of the United Nations".

As global leaders — young and old, women and men — we must work together to encourage others to achieve the goals and objectives of the United Nations. The theme of this year's general debate captures precisely what needs to be done by all of us as a community of nations and a community of leaders. The message is loud and clear. Pursuing peace, equality and sustainability for our peoples requires global leadership and shared responsibility. There is no effective leadership without genuine responsibility and vice versa.

The first point I wish to make today is that global leadership and responsibility will determine the outcome of our quest for lasting peace. Peace is not merely the absence of war. It is also a question of the commitment to peace. Our continuous efforts to maintain stability and prevent conflict must underpin our pursuit of happiness. But this must start with genuine leadership. It is at home, in our surroundings and in our respective regions, that we must start working to create ecosystems of peace, stability and prosperity. Indonesia will always believe in that way of thinking.

We cannot do so alone, which is why, as an elected non-permanent member of Security Council next year, Indonesia will need the membership's continued support. We are grateful for the General Assembly's trust and confidence, and we will do our best to become its true partner for peace.

For the past five decades, we have enjoyed a long peace dividend in the Asia-Pacific region. Since geopolitical and geostrategic landscapes are changing so fast, Indonesia sees the opportunity to extend the peace dividend to the larger Indo-Pacific region. Along with other countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, we are promoting an outlook that sees the Indian and Pacific regions as a single geostrategic theatre and a region of cooperation, not competition, with a view to supporting a greater global ecosystem of peace.

The commitment to and responsibility for peace must be replicated across all regions, including in the Middle East. Central to peace and stability in the Middle East is the long-standing question of Palestine. If we cannot resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, our commitment to peace will be called into question. Setbacks persist as we speak in the form of the imminent

threat to the status quo of Jerusalem, the precarious lives of millions of Palestinian refugees that are at stake and the humanitarian situation, which is getting worse every day. Not only does the current situation harm the peace process, it destroys the hopes of the Palestinian people — the hopes of all of us — for an independent Palestinian State. The international community can no longer remain at a standstill on these issues. We must call for immediate negotiations that can make the two-State solution a reality. Indonesia will continue to stand with the people of Palestine until the day Palestine is truly indepe ent.

At the global level, Indonesia is honoured to have contributed to United Nations peacekeeping. To date, Indonesia has contributed more than 3,500 personnel in nine United Nations missions and is the eighth-largest troop- and police-contributing country. We will not stop there. We are ready to contribute 4,000 peacekeepers by 2019, with an increasing proportion of female peacekeepers. Beyond numbers, we believe that United Nations peacekeeping operations should continue to be the Organization's flagship enterprise. But that can be achieved only if we strengthen its capacity to deliver on its mandate. That is why we have endorsed the Action for Peacekeeping declaration.

I will begin my second point with a question: after peace has been achieved, will that peace be enough? Peace should not be seen as an end in and of itself. It must create an environment conducive to development. Peace and development must go hand in hand, as they are mutually reinforcing. Only then can peace bring benefits to our peoples. It is for that reason that development goals and commitments have been agreed upon. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change are but two obvious examples.

Another milestone was also reached in December, namely, the first-ever global instrument on migration, which was adopted in Marrakech. These agreements represent global leadership and a shared responsibility for a better future where no one is left behind. That applies to all countries, be they large or small, from the North or the South, developed or developing. In short, those agreements show our collective compassion and selflessness, which are the badges of global leadership at its finest. The next question is how we are going to live up to those commitments. The answer is that global leadership needs to create environments conducive to the fulfilment of these commitments, which is very simple on paper but not so straightforward in practice.

Three years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, many success stories have been told. However, results and progress may vary in various parts of the world. Lingering conflicts, instability, protectionism and an uncertain global economic outlook continue to hamper our common efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Regrettably, time is not on our side. Some of us are running behind schedule in our efforts to hit the SDG targets. To overcome that fact, the pace of implementation must be accelerated. Decisive actions must be taken to improve access to financing, capacity-building and technology. Global leadership and partnership must be pursued in future to achieve win-win solutions.

As part of our global leadership and responsibility, Indonesia has taken concrete steps to implement its commitments. Through South-South and triangular cooperation, Indonesia has offered more than 500 capacity-building programmes to more than 6,000 participants across the globe, from Asia to Africa, from the South Pacific to the Caribbean. We will soon launch the Indonesia Aid for Development programme to reinforce the delivery of our international assistance. Moreover, earlier this year, Indonesia hosted the first-ever Indonesia-Africa Forum, which is a testament to our strong commitment to promote win-win cooperation with the African continent. Furthermore, as a follow-up, we will convene an Indonesia-Africa Infrastructure Dialogue next year, which will focus on infrastructure, in order to accelerate development in Africa.

As the largest archipelagic country in the world, we are fully aware of the adverse impact of climate change, as the countries that have to face this issue most acutely have been the small island developing States. We are convening an archipelagic and island States conference at the margins of the Our Ocean Conference next month as proof of our firm leadership and commitment to addressing this matter.

Peace and development can be sustained only if we have an equitable society, which leads me to my third point today: the importance of creating a society that is just, inclusive, democratic and respectful of human rights. An equitable, tolerant, and moderate society is key to addressing the major challenges of violent extremism and radicalism. Injustice, exclusiveness, extreme poverty, illiteracy and massive youth unemployment

must be eliminated. Hard- and soft-power approaches must be improved. For that reason, we have amended our national law and strengthened our soft approach in order to adapt to new evolving challenges. The recent horrific terrorist attack in Surabaya, Indonesia, showed that the use of violence by terrorists knows no bounds. Using children as weapons can never be right. But that attack will only strengthen our determination to work more closely with the international community.

In order to create peaceful, sustainable and equitable societies, all countries must respect international law and the principles of the United Nations, including the respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other countries. In that regard, Indonesia strongly deplores the attempts of one country to support or, even worse, become part of separatist movements. Such acts of hostility have no place in the United Nations system, especially since they are acts in clear violation of United Nations principles. Indonesia has long chosen to build friendly relations with that particular country, including in showing our solidarity and sympathy during difficult times. But when such hostile acts continue, Indonesia will not remain silent. Indonesia will not let any country undermine its territorial integrity. Like any other sovereign country, Indonesia will firmly defend its territorial integrity. I repeat: Indonesia will firmly defend its territorial integrity.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies require a more responsive, responsible and credible United Nations. We at the United Nations must show leadership, which is why United Nations reform is unavoidable. Otherwise, the United Nations will become obsolete and unable to respond to the needs and challenges of today and tomorrow.

The goal of the United Nations reform is crystal-clear. The Organization needs to be better positioned to help countries sustain peace and achieve the SDGs. Each one of us has a role to play in keeping the United Nations relevant and in ensuring that the United Nations delivers. Indonesia stands ready to contribute to that noble goal for the sake of humankind.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Indonesia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Muhammad Jusuf Kalla, Vice-President of the Republic of Indonesia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Daniel Kablan Duncan, Vice-President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Daniel Kablan Duncan, Vice-President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Daniel Kablan Duncan, Vice-President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Duncan (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I would like to congratulate Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her auspicious election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-third session and wish her, on behalf of the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, His Excellency Mr. Alassane Ouattara, every success in the implementation of the priorities of her mandate. Our congratulations also go to her predecessor, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, for the quality of the work accomplished during his term of office. Allow me also to pay special tribute to our Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, for his tireless efforts and strong determination to consolidate the important role of the United Nations.

Our session opens in an international context marked by many challenges and uncertainties that are gradually eroding our ability to respond collectively and adequately to threats to international peace and security. In addition, there are challenges relating to humanitarian and health crises, extreme poverty, and violations of human rights and democratic values. The Organization we share and the world today seem to be losing their vocation to protect the most vulnerable, to promote a more just and inclusive global governance, and to build a true community of destiny among nations.

This observation justifies and makes essential the existence of the United Nations and reminds us that changes in the international scene and the successive shifts in international actors should not be to the detriment of the Organization. There is therefore an

urgent need to speed up the modernization of our Organization and to consolidate the foundations of the Charter of the United Nations. Based on that important action, we welcome the aptly chosen theme of the general debate for this session of the General Assembly, namely, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies".

Little progress is being made, unfortunately, in the struggle against world hunger and extreme poverty, the increasing number of crises and human tragedies, and the flow of displaced persons and refugees, all of which continue to be significant sources of concern for the international community. The theme of this session is therefore relevant and constitutes a call to reinvent the action of the United Nations and the modes of collaboration among its Member States.

The challenges and uncertainties facing our world today must lead Member States to embrace a shared vision of the central role and value of the United Nations in shaping our collective responses. Member States must therefore be resolute in taking back the ownership of our universal Organization so that it remains an organization for all peoples, in accordance with the ideals of the founding fathers. In order to accomplish that, one of the priorities is to restore full moral authority to the United Nations, so that it can act and enforce its resolutions with the support of its Member States in all the wide-ranging fields of collective action at the service of all peoples.

The United Nations is at a crossroads and must meet various expectations that will shape its future and effectiveness. In that regard, Côte d'Ivoire believes, as President Alassane Ouattara has often said, that now is the time to reform the Security Council so that it can be more effective and more representative of today's world. Only a truly united Council can enable our Organization to effectively address major security issues such as the fight against nuclear proliferation, terrorism, mass crimes and crimes against humanity. At the same time, we must agree that the fight against global warming will be successful only if we fully accept that global warming is a threat to world peace and international security.

The solidarity that we ardently call for in the settlement of conflicts must not be selective or be limited to mere declarations of intent. We must in all circumstances reach a minimum moral and political consensus, allowing our Organization not to remain unmoved by the sight of the faces ravaged by the devastating effects of conflicts, wars and endemic diseases that we see daily on our television screens. Such a consensus must also enable the Organization to play an important role in promoting conflict prevention and strengthening democratic institutions as the only means of combating rivalries between neighbours, as well as political, ethnic and religious tensions and border conflicts.

The responsibility of the United Nations for a new commitment to action should continue to expand based on the principle of the responsibility to protect, which became a standard of public international law when it was adopted by all Member States at the 2005 World Summit. I would like to take this opportunity to pay a well-deserved tribute to our late former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who died on 18 August, for his commitment to the success of that Summit. My delegation celebrates the memory of that worthy son of Africa, who was one of the most remarkable figures in the history of the United Nations. His vast and rich experience of international issues contributed, through his numerous initiatives and actions, to the strengthening of international peace and security.

We must keep in mind that no collective security system can be viable unless we seek to eradicate the main causes of the sociopolitical unrest apparent in many States, in particular extreme poverty. While there is no doubt that the United Nations is focusing more and more on economic issues, it is imperative that we step up action on the social level, which is essential. Humankind should be more at the heart of our concerns, as has been reflected in the focus of the major questions that have been the subject of the conferences organized on major issues, such as the protection of children, the protection of women, population and development, and human rights. Unfortunately, however, those meetings yielded few concrete results.

That is why Côte d'Ivoire invites the international community to implement the relevant resolutions adopted during this cycle of thematic conferences that recognize the need to reject widespread poverty and combat illiteracy and endemic diseases, famine, malnutrition and other disparities. Otherwise, it is feared that some States facing large disparities will become breeding grounds or sanctuaries for terrorist groups, money-laundering centres or hubs for the illegal international transit and trafficking of drugs.

The human dimension embraced by the Ivorian Government in drawing up its development policy has consisted of taking measures to ensure a better distribution of the benefits of strong economic growth and a more effective struggle against poverty. The significant investments devoted to infrastructure and the social sectors have made it possible to improve access to education, water, electricity and health care, leading to a significant reduction in the rate of poverty. In order to enhance and accelerate that momentum, Côte d'Ivoire has given itself the means through its second national development plan for 2016-2020, to mobilize the necessary resources to the tune of $60 billion. We have also adopted important security measures in the fight against the global threats that face all countries in the region.

The challenges posed by unregulated migratory flows concern all of us, and we call for the concerted management of that significant issue, which affects mainly young people from Africa. The stance taken by Côte d'Ivoire on that matter, which is shared by most countries in our region, has always been that the problem must be tackled principally from the development point of view. Only the work and development opportunities that are offered to our young people so that they can forge a future on their native soil can resolve the issue in a sustainable way.

That stance is bolstered by the fact that 26 per cent of those living in Côte d'Ivoire are foreign nationals, as Côte d'Ivoire receives a significant share of regional migration flows. There is no denying that the management of the migration crisis requires a commitment from the countries of origin, transit and arrival. That is the only way in which we will be able to effectively fight against human trafficking and find appropriate solutions to irregular migration, as advocated by the African Union-European Union Summit held in 2017 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

It is through the accelerated implementation of the major reforms set out in Agenda 2063 that Africa can become the new frontier for development. Finally, in seeking solutions to the challenges we face, our collective intelligence dictates that we cooperate in the framework of a more cohesive, democratic and efficient Organization.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Daniel Kablan Duncan, Vice-President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Ms. Epsy Campbell Barr, First Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Costa Rica

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the First Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Costa Rica.

Ms. Epsy Campbell Barr, First Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Costa Rica, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Epsy Campbell Barr, First Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Costa Rica, and inviting her to address the Assembly.

Ms. Campbell Barr (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am very grateful to be able to address the Assembly as a female Chancellor and Vice-President of the Republic of Costa Rica. I extend to the Assembly and the representatives of all countries a warm greeting from President Carlos Alvarado Quesada. My country is fully convinced that together we can build a different future with courage, determination, imagining the impossible and striving to achieve it. The fact that the Assembly is today presided over by a woman, the fourth to lead this forum in its 73 years of existence, is part of a new moment in history when equality between men and women is built on concrete acts. That is why my country welcomes her election and congratulates her. President Carlos Alvarado Quesada formed a gender-balanced cabinet in Costa Rica for the first time in its history, and the country today benefits from the talent, ability, knowledge and leadership of women in positions of power.

We thank the Secretary-General for the impetus he has generated aimed at achieving gender parity within the United Nations system, and we reaffirm our commitment to continue to support the specific measures proposed for that purpose. The economic empowerment of women is also of vital importance for women if they are to exercise their autonomy, while

their incorporation into the labour market significantly and evidentially contributes to the economy and to families, communities and society in general. Costa Rica is convinced that it is necessary to continue to make progress in that area and is therefore co-chairing, together with the United Kingdom, the Group of Champions for Women's Economic Empowerment.

Our country renounced its army 70 years ago, and since then our defence doctrines have been based on dialogue, negotiation between States and international law. That achievement is cherished by the Costa Rican people and one that we wish to share as we approach the bicentenary of our independence. The decisions that our leaders face do not involve renovating our military arsenals or engaging in strategic military alliances. Costa Rica is convinced of the need to ensure sustainable development in all three of its dimensions: social, economic and environmental; to promote inclusion and the universalization of access to opportunities; and to invest in education, health and housing, with particular attention to populations in vulnerable situations.

Costa Rica believes in democracy, with a robust electoral system that guarantees that nobody can perpetually remain in power. Costa Rica is also convinced of the need to protect human rights with a modern legal system supported by advanced international conventions and inspired by the needs of those who have suffered discrimination and prejudice. Furthermore. Costa Rica is convinced of the need for individual freedom, protecting the right to expression, communication and information. Costa Rica expresses those commitments as a member of the community of nations, trusting in the protections afforded by international law and the standards of coexistence and avoiding any provocation from other countries.

For that reason, the United Nations, as the multilateral organization par excellence, occupies a special place in the hearts of Costa Ricans. There are those who protest against what they call interference by United Nations bodies, and others who refuse to pay their assessments and financial contributions. There are those who question United Nations institutions, and others who ignore its agreements. Costa Rica, for its part, reiterates the need for the United Nations as a strong, efficient, austere, robust and transparent organization that is committed to sustainable development, dialogue, peace, human rights and protecting the norms of international law. It is not only for Costa Rica, but for many countries and communities as well, that the United Nations represents the last glimmer of hope, and we cannot fail them.

Costa Rica condemns terrorism and violent extremism, which is conducive to terrorism. Women and girls suffer the greatest consequences, and in some cases those consequences are indelible. Peacebuilding must be a sustained effort. We firmly believe in fostering a culture of peace through the promotion of justice, democratic participation, human rights and education, and we reject all types of violence and recognize the important task of preventing the causes of conflicts.

Since 2017, Costa Rica has proudly and with a great sense of responsibility formed part of the group of countries that contribute on the ground under the banner of the United Nations. My country welcomes the participation of Costa Rican women police officers as international observers in the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. We recognize the efforts of the Mission to incorporate an approach based on gender equality. We call for an end to impunity for the most serious crimes. In that connection, we reaffirm our support for the mandate of the International Criminal Court, and we call on those who have made the decision to withdraw from the Court to return to the cause of international criminal law. We strongly support that Court as a legitimate tool for international justice that should be strengthened, because the victims deserve justice, especially in cases where their national systems are not able to provide it.

It is also important to reiterate that sexual violence is always unacceptable. However, what is particularly concerning is its widespread use as a tactic of terror and weapon of war and terrorism, where it is used as one of the most cruel and terrible forms of social coercion; a strategy to control and intimidate entire communities, deeply affecting people's dignity and autonomy. Cases of sexual exploitation and abuse have irreparable consequences for the persons affected. We support the zero-tolerance policy on abuse in that regard. We reiterate our condemnation of such abuse committed by the staff of this Organization, which damages its credibility, impedes the appropriate implementation of mandates and creates excuses for those who want to destroy multilateralism.

We welcome the Panmunjom Declaration and the Pyongyang Declaration, and we are hopeful that they will lead to effective implementation and the complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. We also

express our support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, endorsed by the Security Council. We also celebrate the historic peace agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia. We once again join the international community in calling for the lifting of the blockade against Cuba, which has been in effect for far too many years, affecting the ability of its population to generate development and prosperity.

Costa Rica dreamed of being a country without an army, and for 70 years now that has been a reality. We were also at the forefront of the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty, and today we promote its implementation. Now, together with a group of States and civil society organizations, we are trying to devise a world without nuclear weapons. In our view, the only way to ensure that nuclear weapons are never used again under any circumstances is through their total elimination. With the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the international community decided that the legally binding prohibition of those weapons is a fundamental contribution to the accomplishment of that objective. With deep conviction and a sense of ethics, we call today on all countries to sign and ratify that historic Treaty.

Costa Rica cannot and will not be indifferent to the suffering of and uncertainty facing those we consider our brothers and sisters. Since April, we have expressed our concern at the deterioration of institutions and the systematic erosion of human rights in Nicaragua, as has been confirmed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Selective repression, intimidation and criminalization have undermined the freedoms of its population one by one. We must mention that the grave situation in Nicaragua has claimed several hundred human lives. As a result, our country has experienced an increase in migratory flows and refugee applications. We have responded in an orderly, responsible and supportive manner, prioritizing the protection, respect, dignity and security of the people. However, it is clear that Costa Rica alone cannot carry that burden.

The situation in Nicaragua is not sustainable. Dialogue remains suspended, seemingly indefinitely, and the Government has expelled the delegation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The crisis in that country has the potential to escalate, with a direct impact on the stability and development of all of Central America. Costa Rica reiterates its conviction that only committed and effective dialogue between all parties, leading to a genuine agreement on a timetable for democratization, can be the solution to the conflict that is afflicting our brother country. Today, we ask the international community and the Secretary-General to participate in preventive diplomacy and mediation in the face of that serious situation. When it comes to the lives and dignity of people and the lack of possibility for them to live free from fear and misery, silence makes us accomplices. That is why Costa Rica is speaking out.

We reiterate our concern at the situation in Venezuela and the lack of respect for the rule of law and Venezuelan institutions in that country, as well as the violations of human rights there. Costa Rica has consistently supported the international community in its efforts in that regard, including those made this week in the Human Rights Council in Geneva. We reaffirm our commitment to contributing to overcoming the serious political, economic, social and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, through a peaceful and negotiated solution, within the framework of international law.

This year will be of particular importance in building a consensus that will allow us to reach a global framework of cooperation, so that we can at least achieve safe, orderly and regular migration with the adoption of a global compact on migration and another on refugees. Costa Rica welcomes that possibility with enthusiasm. Only with constant coordination and cooperation, including with those countries that responsibly receive flows of migrants and refugees — especially if they are developing countries — will we be able to manage human mobility in a way that enhances its positive effects. It is essential to deepen our approach to human mobility, a global and complex phenomenon of great relevance, which should also become one of the key points on the international agenda. We need a common, comprehensive and long-term vision of migration and refuge-seeking, based on sovereignty, joint responsibility in its governance and, above all, solidarity. Let us create a world where diversity, identity and culture are understood as a source of wealth and growth.

Costa Rica draws attention to the International Decade for People of African Descent, which began in January 2015. In 2020, we will have a review at the mid-point of the Decade, but we know already that we have not made sufficient progress. We require the necessary resources, as mandated by the General Assembly, in order to take concrete measures to

recognize the contributions of that population and to respect, protect and realize their fundamental rights. Costa Rica also welcomes the adoption of the Decade of Family Farming, which aims to improve the working and living conditions of family farmers so they can contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Family farming is linked to the sustainable production and consumption of food and to the cultural events of our population. We invite all countries to take action, both nationally and internationally, in order to realize the aspirations of the Decade.

It is imperative to ensure compliance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Administration of President Carlos Alvarado Quesada maintains its commitment to the national pact for the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals, which was signed in 2016 by the public sector, the business sector, workers' organizations, civil society organizations, faith-based organizations, social organizations and local governments. Costa Rica recognizes the comprehensive, universal, transformative and multidimensional nature of the SDGs. We consider it essential that, in order to fulfil the 2030 Agenda, we fully acknowledge the concept of the multidimensionality of poverty, as required by a thorough response from the international community and the United Nations system, so that middle-income countries can continue to access finance and ensure the closing of the structural gaps that persist and hamper our efforts to achieve sustainable development.

We are currently working on a decarbonization plan that is innovative, decisive and committed, with a long-term vision and a set of immediate actions that require transformational efforts in our society. The plan identifies a series of technological transformations, such as efficient and renewable public transport, a fleet of zero-emission light vehicles, integrated waste management and low-emission waste disposal, highly efficient agri-food systems that generate low-carbon foodstuffs, a model of livestock development that is resilient and eco-competitive based on productive efficiency and an increase in forest cover and ecosystem services rooted in nature-based solutions. The decarbonization of our society is the greatest task of our generation. Costa Rica aspires to become a laboratory in the process of the extensive decarbonization of the world economy. Just as we once abolished our army, we are now going to abolish our dependence on fossil fuels. We are determined to do everything necessary and, with the collaboration of us all, it will happen.

In that regard, Costa Rica invites all Member States to participate in a new initiative, namely, the coalition for all. This coalition seeks to promote the integration of the language of human rights and gender into multilateral environmental agreements and environmental financial mechanisms in an articulated and consistent manner. This week, we also signed the Escazú Agreement, also known as the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean. That innovative international instrument, for which Costa Rica co-chaired the negotiation process, represents the contribution of our region to environmental democracy and the construction of a more sustainable and more inclusive world.

Great transformations need not wait. We can be part of a new generation of light made up of innovative and committed people with an inspiring vision of our potential as a society and determined to promote a positive global transformation. It is time to forge a more sustainable, fairer, freer and more inclusive future. Costa Rica believes that all nations around the world share those aspirations. In any case, the Assembly can count on the full assistance of Costa Rica to work in that direction with anyone willing to believe that we are all obliged to deliver a better planet to the coming generations.

It is true that we have witnessed global and national events that seem to highlight setbacks in terms of peace and human rights and even actions that seem contrary to sustainable development, but that fact must not discourage us. One era dies, and another is born. It dies at this moment in history. It is time to celebrate the fact that young leaders from all over the world are moving to promote rights and build better societies. Today, we have a committed, passionate and compassionate youth that often renounces its own comfort to promote and protect the rights of others. I have called that generation the "generation of light", because it rescues the best of the past and the best of the achievements of humankind, and the commitment to the environment, society, peace and well-being. It is a generation that looks to the future without fear and is rallying for a new world without weapons or violence, for the environment, for peace, for human rights, for sexual diversity, against any type

of discrimination and in favour of a better world. The generation of light will undoubtedly change the world.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the First Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Costa Rica for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Epsy Campbell Barr, First Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Costa Rica, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. K. P. Sharma Oli, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal.

Mr. K. P. Sharma Oli, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. K. P. Sharma Oli, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Oli (Nepal): First of all, I extend warm felicitations to the President on her election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its current session. The outgoing President deserves our appreciation for successfully steering the Assembly's work during the previous session. We also commend the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, for the dedication, commitment and leadership with which he has been serving the Organization. As we commemorate the 100th birth anniversary of Nelson Mandela, I would like to express my profound respect for that great leader and the cause he fought for. An iconic figure, he was a great human soul and remains a source of inspiration for peace, justice, harmony, forgiveness and reconciliation. This year, we have also lost an outstanding diplomat and visionary in the former Secretary-General, the late Kofi Annan. I also pay sincere tribute to the tremendous contributions he made to the promotion of peace, development and human rights in the world.

I bring greetings and best wishes from the land of Buddha and Sagarmatha, also known as Mount Everest, for the success of this session of the Assembly. Since I addressed the Assembly from this rostrum in 2006 (see A/61/PV.18), Nepal has undergone a historic political transformation. Through dialogue and deliberations, mutual respect and accommodation, we have steered a uniquely successful home-grown, nationally led and nationally owned peace process. It was about the peaceful transformation of an armed conflict. It was about the restructuring of the State and promoting unity in diversity. It was about making the Nepali people truly sovereign and a source of State power, and it was about institutionalizing and consolidating all those achievements in a democratic constitution through a popularly elected constituent assembly.

Despite the difficulties in the wake of devastating earthquakes, the political leaders rose to the occasion with a common resolve to promulgate the new Constitution in September 2015, therefore fulfilling the seven-decade-long aspirations of the people to write their own constitution. The Constitution of Nepal not only consolidates democratic polity under a federal republican order, but also embodies the extensive rights and freedoms of the people. The separation of powers, the system of checks and balances, the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary, periodic elections, and inclusive and proportional representation are the defining features of the new Constitution.

Our vision is one of a comprehensive democracy that empowers individuals not only politically but also socially, economically and culturally. Implementing the Constitution was another paramount task before us. We accomplished that historic task last year through the free, fair and impartial elections at the federal, provincial and local levels with a record turnout and the participation of people from all sections of our society. Most importantly, the elections produced elected bodies with a 41 per cent proportion of women. We remain committed to bridging the gap of the remaining 9 per cent to reach 50 per cent. The elections not only ensured the democratic rights of the Nepali people in the widest possible manner, they also produced the strongest Government for many years. The Government that I lead has the support of more than three quarters of our Parliament. Governments in the provinces also enjoy strong majority support. We have achieved much-needed political stability through those landmark elections.

With those historic achievements, we have laid the foundations for creating an egalitarian and just society, where all citizens are treated equally and receive equal protection and opportunities. Social justice remains at

the centre of our polity. The United Nations and the international community supported our peace process, for which we are grateful. Nepal's case is a unique example of a peaceful and democratic transformation. It is telling testimony to the fact that dialogue triumphs over differences and ballots triumph over bullets. We believe that what Nepal has achieved in conflict transformation can be an inspiring success story for many people longing for peace in various parts of the world. We are willing to share our experiences and provide our insights.

With hard lessons learned in the arduous journey of democratic transition, we have emerged as a confident nation capable of sustaining political gains while undertaking a course of economic transformation. Cognizant of the need to accelerate the process of development, my Government has set a vision entitled Prosperous Nepal and Happy Nepali. We will realize that vision with the right mix of the prudent utilization of our natural resources and the optimal mobilization and management of the human resources with which we are endowed. We count on the continued goodwill, support and cooperation of the international community in our development endeavours. Our foreign policy guides us to maintain amity with all and enmity with none. It has shaped our independent outlook on global issues, which we consider on their merits. We believe that regional and global efforts complement our national development efforts. In line with our foreign-policy priority favouring regional cooperation, we recently hosted the fourth summit of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation. We would like to see a revitalized South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation as an important regional organization.

The world today is at an important juncture with a unique juxtaposition of perils and promises. Challenges ranging from poverty, terrorism, climate change, food insecurity, forced displacement and natural disasters to an arms race continue to confront the global community. Intra-State conflicts have taken a heavy toll on millions of lives. For the first time in decades, world hunger is rising after a prolonged decline. In many regions, peace remains obscure. Inequality within nations, as well as among them, is increasing. Countries have failed to adopt sustainable production and consumption patterns. In that regard, the theme of the general debate, entitled "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies", resonates well with the needs of our time.

Nepal supports the seven priority areas that the President of the General Assembly eloquently outlined in her inaugural address (see A/73/PV.1) to the Assembly earlier this week. I hope that the current session will seriously deliberate on those priority areas with the gravity and urgency that they deserve. Therein lies our political will and determination. With that commitment, we must ensure that the voice of the people struggling for their rights, liberty, freedom and justice in various parts of the world, including Syria, Yemen, Palestine and many other places, is heard and addressed.

The endeavour to make the United Nations relevant to all people is well captured in the philosophy of leaving no one behind. Global efforts for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in its third year appear too few and insufficient by far. Needless to say, the least developed countries (LDCs) are the battleground on which the 2030 Agenda will be won or lost. Development in the LDCs appears dismal despite the global economy's record performance. International support measures are failing to make a dent.

The implementation of internationally agreed commitments made to promote those commitments is far below our expectations. Reaching out first to those furthest behind is not a luxury. It is not a charity either. It is an international obligation, duty and social responsibility. The impact will be fully realized only when external support measures respect national ownership and leadership, are aligned with national priorities and come through a national system. Such measures must work to build productive capacity, create jobs and develop human resources. Only easy access to markets, the removal of trade barriers, the injection of financing and investments, the building of capacity and the transfer of technology, and the overcoming of infrastructural bottlenecks can enable LDCs, especially landlocked least developed countries, to take the path to sustainable development and integrate themselves into global value chains.

With regard to climate change, the clock of caution is loudly ticking. The impact of climate change burdens the poorest and most vulnerable countries, like my own country, Nepal, despite their negligible emissions of greenhouse gases. We cannot remain a bystander when snow-clad mountains, known as the water towers of the

world, are receding, glaciers are retreating and erratic weather patterns are causing floods and inundation in the plains. It is an unpleasant irony that we have been the victims of catastrophes that others have caused. The impacts of climate change on mountainous and small island countries are felt as an existential threat. The loss of lives, property and biodiversity and the increasing phenomenon of calamities are becoming untenable. A matching and robust response is required. We cannot evade the responsibility, nor will there be any excuse for inaction. We must act decisively to ensure that climate justice respects the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. To make that happen, international cooperation and collaboration to promote adaptation and mitigation are a sine qua non. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change must be implemented in its entirety and in good faith.

The health and well-being of our children and young people are an investment in the future. Delivering quality education, imparting skills and spurring innovation can together produce a virtuous composite force enabling young people to be relevant and able to contribute to society and nation-building. We must support the full development of their potential, creativity and energy to flourish. Inculcating an entrepreneurial spirit and creating decent job opportunities for youth can fuel economic development and help positively transform our societies. At the same time, we must also inculcate them with civil and moral values so that they become a force for harmony and tolerance in society.

The frontiers of technology are ever expanding, and they have been a major driving force for societal transformation. But the digital dividend is unevenly distributed, and the digital divide is widening. Technology has been a powerful agent of change and transformation. At the same time, the technological revolution is disruptive. The developing countries, especially the LDCs, are struggling to cope with the new modes of production and consumption. We must create an environment that can ensure easy access to affordable technology and remove barriers preventing their transfer. It should provide a level playing field for all countries so that they can benefit from and propel economic growth through new technologies.

This year, the United Nations has taken the boldest reform initiatives in decades. The cross-pillar restructuring of the Organization provides us with an important opportunity to strengthen its development pillar and demonstrate its efficiency in delivery. We believe that a repositioned United Nations development system will better deliver on the 2030 Agenda. It is important that a new generation of country teams learn new methods so that we can ensure a sound system, but, more than that, the unlearning of old habits — which demanded that we undertake this reform — is equally important. What matters also in the reform is the transformation of the culture. The new culture must include accountability, transparency and national ownership at its core. Nepal welcomes the reforms undertaken in the peace and security architecture, as well as in the management of the Organization. The United Nations should reflect the mosaic of its membership and achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness. Security Council reform is long overdue. Any reform must reflect current realities and ensure justice for historically underrepresented and developing countries.

Nepal reaffirms its principled stand for the general and complete disarmament of all weapons of mass destruction. In that context, we welcome the recent efforts made by the United States and the two Koreas towards the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and the establishment of peace and stability there. Nepal welcomes the Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament with the hope of a renewed impetus for disarmament. Nepal commends the beginning of deliberations within the framework of the Kathmandu process for developing innovative confidence-building measures in the Asia-Pacific region. No region is immune from the menace of terrorism. Nepal strongly condemns all acts of terrorism, committed by whomever and for whatever purposes. Nepal calls for an early conclusion of a comprehensive convention against terrorism.

Never has the issue of human mobility figured so prominently on the agenda of the United Nations. Nepal looks forward to the December Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. Ensuring the human rights and the well-being of all migrant workers remains our priority. Nepal believes that the compact will serve that purpose and make migration work for all. Nepal has hosted thousands of refugees for decades on humanitarian grounds. The international community must uphold the right of refugees to return to their homeland safely and with full dignity.

The complexities and intractability of global conflicts render the current efforts to promote conflict prevention even more important. Mediation — an underutilized tool — can be applicable in all phases of the conflict continuum. Nepal recently marked six decades of its partnership for peace with the United Nations. Nepal has responded to every call, even on the shortest notice and without national caveats. Nepal welcomes the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiativeand has endorsed the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. Troop- and police-contributing countries must be provided with fair opportunities to serve in leadership positions, both at Headquarters and in field missions. A sustained partnership for the capacity-building of peacekeepers and providing for their safety and security can enhance the performance of peace operations. Nepal condemns attacks on peacekeepers. Ending the indignity of sexual exploitation and abuse is a must. Nonetheless, peace missions alone cannot be a substitute for home-grown preventive and conflict-resolution measures. Our own experience demonstrates that peacekeeping alone cannot do what politically negotiated settlements can do.

Nepal's commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights is total and unflinching. We hold development, democracy and respect for human rights as interdependent and mutually reinforcing. As a member of the Human Rights Council, we will continue to play our constructive role in delivering on the Council's mandates. The ongoing transitional justice process in Nepal respects the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of Nepal and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), as well as the reality on the ground, in our efforts to sustain peace and deliver justice. We will not allow impunity in cases involving serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law.

We are living in an uncertain world. Cold War rivalries are resurfacing. Trade tensions are mounting. Multilateralism is being questioned. The Secretary-General's opening statement largely captures the realities of the contemporary world and the sentiment of Member States in the areas of peace and security, sustainable development, climate change, migration and technology. We underscore the centrality of the United Nations as the most legitimate multilateral forum in which to deliberate the challenges that we all confront globally. It is the obligation of all Member States to preserve the sanctity of multilateralism and uphold respect for international law. The problems that we are confronting today on a global scale can be overcome only by global collaboration and partnership in absolute trust and confidence. We have yet to make an international system that is truly inclusive and promotes fairness, equality and justice for all States, both big and small.

In conclusion, let me reiterate Nepal's profound commitment to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We remain as firm on that score as we have been for the past 63 years since we joined the Organization. The onus of providing the world with direction lies on us. Our collective wisdom and leadership should aim at the realization of the aspirations of all for peace and prosperity. Let us collectively resolve that the history of the twenty-first century shall not be written as one of confrontation, conflict, poverty, exclusion, underdevelopment, injustice and exploitation. It should rather be a history of cooperation, harmony, prosperity, inclusion, development, justice and fairness.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal for the statement he has just made.

Mr. K. P. Sharma Oli, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Enele Sosene Sopoaga, Prime Minister and Minister for Public Utilities of Tuvalu

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Public Utilities of Tuvalu.

Mr. Enele Sosene Sopoaga, Prime Minister and Minister for Public Utilities of Tuvalu, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Enele Sosene Sopoaga, Prime Minister and Minister for Public Utilities of Tuvalu, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Sapoaga (Tuvalu): It gives me great pleasure, on behalf of the Government and the people of Tuvalu, to address the General Assembly and to congratulate

Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. Tuvalu has full confidence in her leadership, which will, together with the Secretary-General's support, further advance our work in the United Nations.

Tuvalu also reaffirms its commitment to the noble values and principles of the United Nations, of which Tuvalu has great pride in being a Member since it joined in 2000. We also want to acknowledge with sincere affection the passing of the late Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General, and his outstanding contributions to the work of this body while leading us from the dusk of the previous century into the dawn of the twenty-first century, which included the considered admission of my country to this great Organization.

We welcome the critical theme of the current general debate, "Making the United Nations relevant for all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies". It rightly reminds us that we now need responsible global leadership more than ever — leadership that values multilateralism and trust and takes seriously the moral responsibility to help those who need help. That is the leadership that the world needs in order to succeed against the defining global challenges facing the United Nations, in particular in connection with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the role of that Agenda in combating climate change and environmental degradation.

This year was characterized by the fear of a potential nuclear war, as if we had not learned from the wrongs of our past. Now we have nuclear weapons that are much more powerful than those dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Numerous nuclear tests in our Pacific region have caused unimaginable damage to the environment and the health of our people. Some of our islands continue to cope with the effects of nuclear radiation decades after those tests. The recent Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting in Nauru reaffirmed our commitment to peace and security in the Pacific region. In the Boe Declaration on Regional Security for the Pacific region we called for urgent actions with regard to not only military, but also human security issues. In that spirit, two days ago, Tuvalu signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which provides the international community with an opportunity to ban such weapons. We urge all to take concrete actions to make our world safe.

Non-communicable diseases and tuberculosis hit the poor and vulnerable particularly hard and drive them deeper into poverty. We commend the successful outcomes of the high-level meetings of the General Assembly on those issues, but rhetoric alone is not enough. It must be followed by meaningful action on the ground to promote healthy lifestyles and diets, supported by adequate financing and monitoring modalities so as to ensure integrated progress. Addressing that issue urgently is critical, and to that end we in Tuvalu have introduced healthy lifestyles with our initiative of afternoon sweat-breaks every Friday provided to all workers in places of work and villages to encourage a more active and healthier lifestyle. We need practical support, however, in the form of funding and resources from the United Nations, as well as the international community.

For small island developing States (SIDS) and least developed countries, the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals depends entirely on how we address issues of climate change. The current global warming trend spells a very bleak and miserable future for small island developing States, especially for low-lying atolls such as Tuvalu — a future that demands huge investments in mitigation and adaptation that are simply beyond our capabilities. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change offers us a lifeline.

But the current commitments contained in the Paris Agreement constitute only a third of what is required in order to avoid the catastrophic consequences of climate change, which poses a direct threat to our existence and survival. As already established by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), unless the global community steps up its actions to significantly lower greenhouse-gas emissions, SIDS like Tuvalu will disappear completely within the next 30 to 50 years — disappear completely. I repeat once again what I said at the twenty-first Conference of Parties in Paris: "Just imagine if you were in my shoes, how you would feel. And what would you do?"

Climate change is a weapon of mass destruction. It is slaughtering fellow human beings throughout the world. The United Nations cannot and must not allow the biggest greenhouse-gas emitters to turn away from their moral duty and responsibility to urgently reduce greenhouse-gas emissions and to save SIDS like Tuvalu by providing the appropriate adaptation support and resources. It would be shameful if all of humankind allowed Tuvalu to disappear. Every single year wasted

with no action taken on climate change draws Tuvalu a year closer to its total demise on Earth.

But Tuvalu will never give up. We will fight to protect and save our islands, our people, our culture and our future. We appeal to this noble Assembly not to allow such consequences to happen. Tuvalu, whose islands and lagoons were used by the American forces in the Second World War to conquer the enemy in the Pacific, urges President Trump and the United States of America to rejoin the Paris Agreement so that we can all paddle together to save the world against our single most threatening enemy, namely, climate change. Failing that, Tuvalu proposes that we, the signatories of the Paris Agreement, quickly return to Paris to critically and urgently reassess our mitigation pledges and dramatically increase our efforts to reduce greenhouse-gas pollution. We cannot allow one country to desert the process and derail our collective efforts.

The next Conference of Parties in Poland is a critically important milestone for climate-change action. We must ensure that the implementation guidelines for the Paris Agreement are concluded. We must also ensure that the Talanoa Dialogue process leads to a strong political declaration and decision that respond adequately to the IPCC 1.5°C report and set a pathway for enhanced climate-change action. In that regard, we seek a commitment from every nation to enhance its efforts to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions as a matter of urgency. We in Tuvalu are fully committed to shifting to 100 per cent renewable energy by 2020 despite our negligible greenhouse-gas emissions.

I extend our deep appreciation to the Governments of India and France for their initiative on solar-energy development as part of the International Solar Alliance and to the European Union, New Zealand, Taiwan, Italy, Austria, Japan and the World Bank for their support for energy efficiency and solar-energy development in my country, Tuvalu. I wish to acknowledge the efforts of notable members of the Security Council in bringing climate change to the fore of its peace and security agenda. That represents a genuine commitment to addressing the most important challenges of our time and the greatest single threat to humankind. It is our humble hope that the entire Security Council membership can agree to include climate change as a permanent agenda item.

We believe that the nexus between climate change and security is fundamental. For a nation like Tuvalu, security and the future are contingent upon urgent action to address climate change. We therefore reiterate our call for the appointment of a special representative of the Secretary-General on climate change and security. We also call on the Security Council to appoint a special rapporteur to produce a regular review of global, regional and national security threats caused by climate change.

We welcome the successful conclusion of the intergovernmental negotiations on the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and commend the spirit of responsible leadership and multilateral cooperation extended to efforts to support the ever-increasing populations that are being affected by conflicts and environmental crises. We believe, however, that all human rights of people displaced as a result of climate change should be protected under an international legal agreement. We therefore reiterate Tuvalu's proposal for a United Nations resolution on the establishment of a legal process to protect the human rights of people displaced by climate change.

This year, Tuvalu proposed that it remain a least developed country, because its ability to achieve sustainable development is being severely compromised by its vulnerability to climate change. We noted with appreciation the support that we have received from development partners and friends to advance that proposal. However, it is our earnest belief that the unique and extreme vulnerabilities of small island developing States must be considered as a fundamental criterion for graduation.

The particular concerns of highly vulnerable SIDS, like Tuvalu, cannot be ignored. In our national strategy for sustainable development — *Te Kakeega* — our unique vulnerability is recognized as enemy number one hampering our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In that regard, we call on the Economic and Social Council to create a special category for SIDS so that we can be afforded special considerations in a similar fashion to those received by the least developed countries. We note the recently released report of the Secretary-General on the assessment resulting from the evolving mandates of the small island developing States units of the Secretariat (A/73/345). The expanded responsibilities of the SIDS unit in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing

States should be matched with expanded resources. We also welcome the review of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and hope that that review will truly reflect and respond to the unique circumstances affecting SIDS and their unique economic, environmental and social vulnerability. In the South Pacific region, we are taking small steps to address that vulnerability. We are in the process of developing a Pacific Island climate-change insurance facility. We seek support from the United Nations-wide system to assist us in developing that facility.

Our small-island economy is inextricably linked to the oceans. The oceans are what we are, our culture, our life and our survival, but global warming, acidification, coral bleaching, solid wastes and plastic pollution and diminishing inshore and offshore stocks of fisheries, on which national economies depend, are gravely affecting the oceans. The United Nations must provide the strongest possible leadership to drive genuine partnerships to address those issues.

The exclusion of Taiwan from the United Nations system has denied its 23 million people the enjoyment of their fundamental rights to participate in and benefit from the United Nations. Taiwan is already a responsible and able partner with Tuvalu and many other countries in many regions of the world, and could do even more if it were allowed to assume its rightful place and role in our global efforts to achieve sustainable development. Tuvalu believes that the United Nations has to make the arrangements necessary to enable Taiwan to participate in meetings, activities and mechanisms within the framework of United Nations processes, including those of the relevant United Nations specialized agencies. In a similar vein, we believe that the long-standing unilateral economic embargo on trade with Cuba directly constrains the development aspirations of the people of that country. It neglects the human rights and the spirit of cooperation espoused by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Likewise, we believe that the United Nations must also engage with the people of West Papua to find lasting solutions to their struggles.

In August 2019, Tuvalu will host the fiftieth Pacific Islands Forum of leaders. I extend our humble invitation to all Pacific Island Forum leaders, our friends and especially our bilateral and multilateral development partners to join us in Tuvalu. It will still be there, I hope. We want to put on record our deepest appreciation to the Government of Taiwan for their generous support in helping us prepare for that important and large-scale regional event. Similarly, I want to acknowledge similar support from the Governments of India, Taiwan, and the Republic of Korea in helping us host the next year's Forum.

On 1 October, next Monday, Tuvalu will celebrate its fortieth anniversary of independence. While holding high our national pride as an independent nation, we fully acknowledge that Tuvalu could never have achieved such status without the due consideration of Members of this body, to whom, on behalf of the people of Tuvalu, I now offer our sincere gratitude. In our striding forward, we acknowledge with deep appreciation, the generosity of all our development partners, particularly our traditional partners: the Republic of China, Taiwan, India, the Republic of Korea, Australia, New Zealand, the European Union, Japan, the United Kingdom, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and many others. As we paddle our canoe forward for the next 40 years, we seek the continuing goodwill of the United Nations family to further advance our achievements based on genuine and durable partnerships.

In conclusion, Tuvalu strongly believes that its collective effort to achieve the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to secure global peace, security and prosperity will be severely compromised unless we all paddle together, as a family, to urgently address climate change and save Tuvalu and the world. God bless Tuvalu. God bless the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank Mr. Enele Sosene Sopoaga, Prime Minister and Minister for Public Utilities of Tuvalu, for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Enele Sosene Sopoaga, Prime Minister and Minister for Public Utilities of Tuvalu, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, and inviting her to address the Assembly.

Sheikh Hasina (Bangladesh) (*spoke in Bangla; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): Let me congratulate the President on her election as the fourth female President of the General Assembly during its 73 years of history. I wish to assure her of my delegation's full support in upholding her commitment to the United Nations.

I also congratulate Secretary-General António Guterres on his firm and courageous leadership in promoting global peace, security and sustainable development.

The theme chosen for this year's session brings back some personal memories for me. Forty-four years ago, my father, the father of the nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, stood at this rostrum and said

> "Peace is an imperative for the survival of mankind. It represents the deepest aspirations of men and women throughout the world." (*A/PV.2243, para.15*).

The United Nations remains the centre of hope for the future of all people in this world of sadness, misery and conflict. My father, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, devoted his life to the socioeconomic development of the people of Bangladesh. He did so at a time when 90 per cent of the population lived below the poverty line. Following 24 years of struggle culminating in the victory of our Liberation War, Bangladesh gained independence under his leadership in 1971. During that long period of struggle, he spent almost 14 years in prison. There were plots to assassinate him time and again.

Following independence, Bangabandhu directed his strength to rebuilding a war-ravaged country with a ruined economy. The people had a great need for relief. Bangladesh set out on its journey as a least developed country (LDC). Yet, misfortune befell our people. Bangabandhu would lead the country for only three and a half years. He was brutally gunned down by assassins on 15 August 1975. Along with him, 18 members of my family, among them my mother Begum Fazilatunnesa, three brothers, the youngest only 10 years of age, and two newly wed sisters-in-law, were also killed. My sister Sheikh Rehana and I happened to be abroad at the time and survived the mayhem. But we were barred from returning to the country. The military dictator who seized power at the time promulgated the Indemnity Ordinance, which blocked the possibility of bringing the killers to justice. We were denied the right to seek justice for the gruesome murders.

I feel the pain and suffering of countless people around the world, like the Rohingya, persecuted and expelled from their homes. It is impossible to build peaceful, just and sustainable societies by ignoring such situations. The Myanmar situation repeatedly reminds us of the genocide committed by the Pakistani occupation forces against our people in 1971. During the nine months of our Liberation War, Pakistanis killed 3 million innocent Bengalis. Two hundred thousand women had to suffer heinous torture and abuse. Ten million people had to flee their homes and take refuge in India. My father was arrested and taken to Pakistan. I was also taken prisoner along with my mother, two younger brothers and a sister. I was expecting my first child at the time. He was born in captivity. We had to spend our days in a damp, unhealthy environment. We are appalled by what we have seen in United Nations reports about atrocities committed against the Rohingya, who have now taken shelter in Bangladesh. Such atrocities are tantamount to genocide and crimes against humanity. We expect the international community, in particular the United Nations, to give due importance to the atrocities and injustice suffered by the Rohingya population in Myanmar.

As fellow human beings, we can neither ignore nor remain silent about the plight of the Rohingya. When my father and family members were killed, I was not allowed to return home for six years. My sister and I were compelled to live abroad as refugees. I can feel the misery of losing one's loved ones and of living in a different land as a refugee. Therefore, I presented a five-point proposal at the General Assembly last year (see A/72/PV.14), with a view to finding a durable and peaceful solution to the suffering of the forcibly displaced and hapless Rohingya. We are disappointed that, despite our earnest efforts, we have not been able to begin Rohingya repatriation in a permanent and sustainable manner.

Myanmar is one of our neighbours. From the outset, we have been trying to find a peaceful solution to the Rohingya crisis through bilateral consultations. So far, three bilateral arrangements have been concluded between Bangladesh and Myanmar for Rohingya

repatriation. Despite their verbal commitment to take back the Rohingya, in reality the Myanmar authorities have yet to accept them back. The 1.1 million Rohingya hosted in Bangladesh are living in an uncertain situation. To the best of our ability, we have made arrangements for their food, clothing, health care, childcare and security. Many countries and organizations, including the United Nations, the Commonwealth and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, have shown solidarity with the Rohingya and extended support and assistance to them. I extend my appreciation and thanks to the international community

As long as the Rohingya are unable to return home, they should, as a temporary arrangement, be able to live in good and healthy conditions. With that in mind, we have started working on a new housing facility for them with all arrangements necessary for their education, health care and other needs. I call upon international organizations to join hands with us in that initiative. I also seek their assistance to help relocate the Rohingya to the facility. The Rohingya crisis had its origin in Myanmar. As such, its solution has to be found in Myanmar. We also wish to see an immediate and effective implementation of the agreement concluded between Myanmar and the United Nations. We want an early, peaceful solution to the Rohingya crisis.

Over the past 30 years, Bangladesh has made its contribution to international peace by deploying more than 158,000 peacekeepers in 54 missions. A total of 145 peacekeepers from Bangladesh have made their supreme sacrifice in the line of duty. Currently, more than 7,000 peacekeepers, including 144 women, are deployed in 10 different missions. Our peacekeepers have been acclaimed for their professionalism, courage and success. We pledged 23 contingents under the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System.

As one of the original proponents, Bangladesh hoped to see a more robust and human rights-centric global compact on safe, regular and orderly migration. In the contemporary global context, the migration compact should be considered a positive step and should serve as a living document for protecting the rights of migrants.

Bangladesh stands firm against terrorism and all organized crime. We shall not allow our territory to be used for any terrorist acts against our neighbours or for any activity detrimental to their interests. Our zero-tolerance policy in countering terrorism will continue undiminished. Our whole-of-society approach has served us well in preventing violent extremism, human trafficking and the flow of illicit drugs. Bangladesh has aligned itself with the Global Call to Action on the World Drug Problem sponsored by the United States.

Since 2009, we have been implementing inclusive and people-centric development policies. On our way to realizing Shonar Bangla or Golden Bengal, as envisioned by our father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, we remain committed to fulfilling our people's aspirations. The World Bank recognized Bangladesh as a middle-income country in 2015. Bangladesh is the forty-third largest economy in the world in terms of nominal gross domestic product (GDP). Our per capita income has increased from $543 in 2006 to $1,752 in 2018. We have achieved an average GDP growth of 7.86 per cent. Inflation has decreased by 5.4 per cent. The poverty rate has dropped from 41.5 per cent in 2006 to 21.4 per cent in 2018. During the same period, extreme poverty has decreased from 24 per cent to 11.3 per cent. Our foreign-exchange reserves totalled $7.5 billion in the 2008/2009 fiscal year and increased to $32.2 billion in 2018. Public investment stood at 4.3 per cent of GDP in 2009 and rose to 8.2 per cent in 2018.

Power-generation capacity has increased to 20,000 megawatts from 3,000 megawatts in 2009. We are building supercritical coal-based power-generation plants to ensure a sustainable power supply. In remote areas without transmission lines, the power supply is being ensured with the help of 5.5 million solar panels. Ninety per cent of our population now has access to electricity. With the launch of the work on the Rooppur nuclear power plant, we have moved a step ahead in the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Bangladesh is now recognized as a global development model. We have commenced our journey from being an LDC to acquiring the status of a developing country. The pathway for graduation is inextricably linked to our implementation strategy for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which is integrated into our seventh five-year plan. We remain fully committed to implementing the SDGs.

Against the backdrop of our current economic growth, there are now immense and large-scale business opportunities in Bangladesh. Foreign investors are being offered various financial incentives like tax holidays, double taxation agreements and duty-free exemptions.

We are setting up 100 special economic zones to help create 10 million job opportunities in Bangladesh.

As a follow-up to my role as a member of the High-level Panel on Water, we remain committed to implementing the outcome of the Panel, which was formed under the joint initiative of the Secretary-General and the World Bank President. I urge world leaders to take urgent actions on the proper appraisal and management of and investment in water. We shall be held responsible by future generations if we fail to do so. My Government remains committed to ensuring safe drinking water and sanitation for all through the achievement of SDG 6. As of now, 99 per cent of our people have access to sanitation and 88 per cent to safe drinking water.

Under our social safety-net programmes, 6.5 million elderly men and women, widows, destitute women and persons with disabilities receive regular allowances. Since 2010, students have received free textbooks from pre-primary up to secondary levels in school. A total of 354.92 million books have been distributed among 43.76 million students this year. Vision-impaired students receive books in Braille. Children from ethnic minorities are given books in their mother tongues. Approximately 20.03 million students from the primary to the graduate level receive stipends. Stipend money for 14 million students is sent directly to their mothers through mobile phones. We have ensured 100 per cent enrolment at the primary level. The literacy rate has increased from 45 per cent to 72.9 per cent over the past nine and half years.

Our home-grown, innovative socioeconomic development models have gained broad popular acceptance. Micro-savings programmes have been introduced for rural, marginalized communities through the One House, One Farm project. The amount saved by beneficiaries in their individual accounts is matched by the Government. The Shelter Project is being implemented with the aim of ensuring that no one is homeless in Bangladesh. We are working to provide each of our villages with urban facilities.

Women's empowerment and participation have been a major factor in Bangladesh's outstanding development. We have promoted women's empowerment by enhancing their education opportunities and facilitating their political and economic emancipation. We have created opportunities for girls to pursue their education free of cost up to the twelfth grade in public educational institutions. At the secondary level, the ratio of girls to boys is 53 to 47. In early 2009, it was 35 to 65. Bangladesh is perhaps the only country in the world where in its national Parliament, the Speaker of the House, the Leader of the House, the Deputy Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition are all women. In the present Parliament, there are 72 elected female members. Thirty-three per cent of seats are earmarked for women in local Government bodies in order to promote women's political empowerment at the grass-roots level. Approximately 20 million women are employed in the agricultural, service and industrial sectors. Women constitute 80 per cent of the 4.5 million workers engaged in the garment sector, which is our largest exports earner. Women entrepreneurs are offered collateral-free bank loans with a 5 per cent service charge. Ten per cent of the small entrepreneurs fund and 10 per cent of industrial plots are earmarked for women entrepreneurs.

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. More than 160 million people now live in a land area of only 147,570 square kilometres. Despite our resource constraints, we have made significant strides across a range of social indices. The maternal mortality rate has decreased to 170 per 1,000, and the mortality rate of children under the age of five has decreased to 28 per 1,000. Life expectancy has increased to 72 years from 64 years in 2009. In the past fiscal year, we spent 5.9 per cent of our national budget in the public health sector. This year, investment in health has increased by 17 per cent. With approximately 18,000 community health clinics and union health centres operating, health care has reached our people's doorsteps. Thirty different types of medicines are being distributed free of cost. Tuberculosis prevention and control efforts have been intensified so as to reach the 2030 Agenda SDG target. As a result, tuberculosis-related deaths have decreased by 19 per cent in the past two years.

Bangladesh has also been playing a pioneering role in raising awareness about the needs of children affected by autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders. In order to further consolidate our efforts in that regard, a specialized cell is being created in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. A National Steering Committee and a National Advisory Committee have already been set up. Saima Hossain Wazed, the Chairperson of the Advisory Committee and a member of the World Health Organisation's Expert Advisory

Panel on Mental Health, has been named a Goodwill Ambassador for South Asia on that issue.

We welcome the formation of the Secretary General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation. The underlying premise of our vision for a digital Bangladesh is to promote people's well-being. The widespread introduction of Internet-based public-service delivery has led to a growth in job creation at the grass-roots level. The idea of a digital Bangladesh has taken shape. We have made our foray into the world of space technology by launching our own satellite, Bangabandhu I, making Bangladesh the fifty-seventh country in the world to have done so. It was in fact a dream of our Father of the Nation that we would one day reach outer space. The launching of that satellite helped us realize the aspiration he instilled in us when he set up the country's first satellite ground station on 14 June 1975.

Bangladesh is one of the 10 most climate-vulnerable countries in the world. Its topography, coupled with its high population density, has made the country particularly vulnerable to climate-change risks. Bangladesh remains committed to implementing the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We are spending over 1 per cent of our gross domestic product on addressing climate-change impacts. We are also promoting climate-resilient agriculture. Initiatives have been taken to increase tree coverage from 22 to 24 per cent in the next five years. A project worth $50 million is being implemented for the conservation of the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We have integrated our development programmes and our efforts to build capacity to combat climate change into a mega-project entitled Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100. It is a water-centric, multi-sectoral, technoeconomic plan with a long-term time frame. It was developed bearing in mind the local geomorphology and global climate-change impact. Bangladesh is the only country in the world that has adopted such a long-term development plan — it spans 82 years.

We are shocked by the continued violation of the rights of the brotherly people of Palestine. That must come to an end. As Chair of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation's Council of Foreign Ministers, we shall continue to work with the international community to resolve the Palestinian question. There are three elements that play the most critical parts in advancing human civilization: peace, humanity and development. For the well-being of human ocieties, we must continue to strive for humankind. Our main objective must be to serve the people and ensure their well-being. It is humanity and goodwill that can take us forward on the pathway to sustainable development. In a world faced with a myriad of challenges, our common interest, shared responsibility and sustainable partnership are our best bet for preserving human civilization.

All my life, I have been working to make a difference in the lives of my people. In the past nine and a half years, Bangladesh has achieved remarkable success in various socioeconomic sectors. The Bangladesh that the world knew as a land plagued by disasters, floods, droughts and hunger has achieved wonders in maintaining international peace, managing disasters, empowering women and consolidating development gains. Bangladesh has now surpassed its neighbours in South Asia on a number of indicators. But our journey has not reached its end. It will continue until the day we can build a Bangladesh free of hunger, poverty, illiteracy and exploitation — the Shonar Bangladesh of our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Joy Bangla, Joy Bangabandhu, may Bangladesh live forever!

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh for the statement she has just made.

Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Pedro Sánchez Pérez-Castejón, President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Pedro Sánchez Pérez-Castejón, President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain.

Mr. Pedro Sánchez Pérez-Castejón, President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Pedro Sánchez Pérez-Castejón, President of the

Government of the Kingdom of Spain, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Sánchez Pérez-Castejón (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to address the General Assembly as President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain. I do so with the emotion that this Hall inspires in me and with respect for the values that gave rise to and guide the daily work of the Organization. I would like to begin by highlighting the fact that, for the first time in history, a Latin American woman is presiding over the Assembly. That is yet another symbol of the fact that global governance in the twenty-first century is inconceivable without the leadership of women. I identify as a feminist politician, and this is without a doubt the time of women.

I have always believed that multilateralism makes it possible to achieve heights that would be unattainable through the individual actions of States. On that note, I want to underscore the value of agreement and dialogue in confronting the challenges that the international community is facing. Those are challenges that my country, Spain, is addressing with a spirit of hope for collective action against those who instil fear and uncertainty. Our commitment to the United Nations stems from common values and a common conviction; it is the pursuit of justice in all its forms through respect for human dignity, democracy, freedom, equality and human rights; and now, above all and more than ever, it is making the promotion of peace and the well-being of peoples our objectives.

The United Nations, like the European project in which my Government firmly believes, was not born out of an idealistic utopia, as some disdainfully make it out to be. It was born out of victory over the forces of hatred, racism and tyranny. Today, the world is facing great global challenges, many of which have been discussed here in the Assembly. We are asked to act on behalf of the people of each of our countries. We are asked and required to prepare real agendas for change. Our times do not require nationalistic or non-inclusive rhetoric. To paraphrase the remarks of the Secretary-General at the opening of the general debate (see A/73/PV.6), now is the moment to forge a new cooperative leadership, based on a willingness not only to listen to others, which is of course important, but also to understand what motivates their positions. Now is the moment to accept, with a deep sense of empathy, that no one alone has a monopoly on the truth; and that we need leadership that can build consensus, forge agreements and find solutions that leverage synergies.

We must not underestimate everything that we have achieved by working together, which is very significant. The world today is a better place than it used to be. It is much better than it would have been if the United Nations had never been founded. But in my opinion, the real strength of the Organization does not lie in its past achievements, although there have been many; rather, it lies in all that we can build to win the future. The time is now. We are the last generation with the opportunity to slow the consequences of climate change and the first generation with the tools to eradicate poverty on the planet. It is, therefore, not a question of seeing obstacles but rather, of seeing opportunities. It is about turning change into a catalyst for achieving sustainable development. That it is not an ideal. It is a real necessity, as many of the previous speakers have stated.

Many countries face a dilemma: to continue to be open societies or to become closed societies, as if a return to the false peace of borders and renouncing collective action were the only means of addressing the uncertainties of these times. We already know where such ideas lead. Now we must look beyond the seeming dictates of these fast-moving times, in which everything seems to change from one minute to the next. Let us move past the lost decade of the economic crisis and the growing inequality that our societies suffer from. Our commitment has a name, a date and goals — the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to which the Government of Spain is fully committed.

The late Kofi Annan, to whom I wish to pay tribute, taught us many things. I should like to share one of them with the Assembly. He told us that human rights, social and economic development and security are all interdependent. I would like to recall those pillars, accompanied by an additional thought — that the dignity of human beings must also be at the heart of our public and political action. The principles that have brought us to this point in our history are not in retreat and never will be. In fact, they are more relevant than ever. That is why Spain will continue to defend those values. Because without dignity and equality between women and men, and without respect for human rights, there will be no peace and development throughout the world.

As a member of the Human Rights Council until 2020, Spain supports initiatives that strengthen the capacity of the Council and the High Commissioner for Human Rights. We are fortunate to have, in the person of the High Commissioner, an individual of political and personal stature — Michelle Bachelet of Chile. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which celebrates its seventieth anniversary this year, provides the framework for moving forward.

There is no greater injustice than that which defines what a human being will or will not be on the basis of whether they were born a boy or a girl. How do we measure all that so many generations of our societies have lost by accepting the discrimination between men and women? Humankind must not tolerate that injustice. We must develop a truly global road map in this twenty-first century to eradicate all forms of discrimination, which women still suffer just because they are women — whether it is gender-based violence, trafficking in women, or female genital mutilation. In that endeavour, the United Nations can rely on Spain's commitment.

The Cabinet of Ministers, which I lead, comprises 60 per cent women members, because we aim to lead by example. And the battle is being fought in companies, in education, in society itself and in leadership positions, where glass ceilings remain simply owing to slow progress. I would like to congratulate the Secretary-General on having reached full gender parity in his Senior Management Group for the first time in the history of the United Nations.

Spain will continue to promote the women and peace and security agenda. It is crucial that women participate as peace brokers in all phases of conflicts and contribute to a resolution. We will continue to support the outstanding work of UN-Women. Spain actively participated in its creation and was the first donor to establish a partnership framework with that organization. My Government has also joined a Circle of Leadership promoted by the Secretary-General to combat sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations. It is essential that we promote a zero-tolerance culture in that area.

There are no short cuts or quick fixes for the major challenges of our time, such as the crises directly affecting countries such as Spain, in particular the refugee and migration crises. Humankind cannot simply accept as inevitable the fact that 68 million people have been forcibly displaced around the world, of whom more than 25 million are refugees, and over 3 million are asylum-seekers.

At this session, the General Assembly will adopt the global compact on refugees. That is a great leap forward. We must work closely with the High Commissioner for Refugees and acknowledge the situation that the refugee turmoil causes in host countries. We should especially bear in mind that 85 per cent of the world's refugees and asylum-seekers are concentrated in developing countries. Those States need our empathy and commitment, and, above all else, justice and an equitable distribution of that responsibility in which we all have the obligation to help. Spain has suffered the calamities of the economic crisis more than almost any other Western European country. Nonetheless, the vast majority of Spanish society has never turned its back on the tragic situation of migrants.

In that connection, I am proud of our society, which has not been drawn into the radical fever of xenophobic discourse based on a culture of fear of the other. Perhaps that is because we remember our own country's history. We were a country of migrants and refugees as well. And that is why we will not abandon our international commitments. If we take in a boat that is adrift in the Mediterranean with 630 people on board, it is not only because international law demands it, but also because it is a moral imperative.

Spain welcomes the coming global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, which is set to be adopted in Marrakech in December. When migration is safe, orderly and regular, it is possible to benefit from its positive impact. Rather than accepting an image of countries as fortresses, with exclusionary and xenophobic narratives, the Government of Spain champions the concepts of solidarity, humanity and respect.

Spain is well aware of what that challenge entails. We are ultimately a country of origin, transit, destination and return. We defend a migration policy whose fundamental goal is to address the root causes of migration, such as poverty, environmental degradation or a lack of opportunities for many young people in the world. Ultimately, we must aspire for migration to be a free choice and not a necessity. Such a policy requires dialogue and cooperation with the countries of origin and transit, especially with the African countries, and we are working with the European Union and in

the Government to devote significant resources to that issue.

There are many forms of poverty. Allow me to underscore the abomination of childhood poverty and the poverty that afflicts women. More than 15 million girls will never have the chance to learn to read or write in primary school, and 330 million women are living on less than $2 a day. To fight that and other forms of poverty, I would like to mention the need for a global perspective and a new twenty-first-century humanism based on the values that have brought the greatest prosperity ever known to humankind.

The 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the current embodiment of that spirit, in which humankind and the planet occupy a central place. We must adopt the Agenda as a new global social contract, binding us all and connecting us with future generations. Spain is going to work with determination to make that change. We have approved an action plan for implementing the 2030 Agenda, and we will launch our own national sustainable development strategy. Indeed, many of the measures adopted by my Government are directly tied to our commitment to meeting the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, namely, combating gender violence, taking measures against child poverty and against energy poverty, regaining universality throughout our country's health-care system, setting policies for grants to advance equal opportunities among young people, and improving workers' rights. Such actions, in short, fully embrace and are aligned with the 2030 Agenda.

Spain is therefore moving forward along the path carved out by the United Nations in the 2030 Agenda. Spain has done that before, in fact, when we championed the Millennium Development Goals, with the largest contribution from any single donor in the United Nations system, as well as being the first to the Sustainable Development Goals project. Furthermore, Spain also created the Water and Sanitation Cooperation Fund in Latin America and the Caribbean some years ago, in which we have invested more than €800 million.

However, none of those efforts make any sense unless we tackle the greatest threat of our generation: the impact of climate change. I come from a country where 40 per cent of our surface area is threatened by desertification. We must fight that battle at every level, which means not only addressing its most immediate effects but also addressing theunderlying structural causes that exacerbate the changes in our climate that we are witnessing. This is why we are keenly aware of the need to undertake a controlled decarbonization of our economy.

Yesterday, I announced that Spain would join the Carbon Neutrality Coalition, deepening our commitment to implementing ambitious long-term strategies for reducing carbon dioxide and greenhouse-gas emissions. That will enable us to fully comply with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We urgently need to make a just ecological transition, laying the foundations for a new production model to which the Spanish Government is fully committed. Our future depends on renewable energy and clean technologies. Only from that starting point will we be able to combine material well-being with social justice and environmental sustainability.

I also wish to share the fact that Spain will participate constructively in the twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which will take place in Poland this year, and the climate change summit to be convened by the Secretary-General in 2019. We hope that those meetings will be successful, and Spain will of course contribute constructively and actively to their smooth execution. Ultimately, it is necessary for us to be able to move forward and comply with the Paris Agreement — we believe that those meetings offer the occasion to advance and achieve our objectives.

It is also up to us to make progress in terms of security, but it must be a security focused on human beings. It has taken us a long time, in my opinion, to learn that security is much more than a concept tied to defence, in the military sense of the term. Security finds its raison d'être not in the absence of conflict, but in guaranteeing freedom.

Terrorism continues to be one of the major threats to our freedom. That phenomenon was not born out of a supposed clash of civilizations, as some have claimed for decades. There are a few areas in which cooperation, along with the multilateralism demonstrated here at the General Assembly and collaborative, cooperative leadership — to which the Secretary-General alluded in his remarks — can bear such abundant and beneficial fruit. The fight against terrorist financing networks is crucial, as are international police and judiciary cooperation and the exchange of information and

intelligence. I am sure that we would all agree that those aspects are fundamental.

However, it is also essential to combat the hatred and violence that are being echoed in so many forums. We must do all we can to prevent our young people from falling prey to fanaticism and radical, exclusionary discourse. Governments, businesses and civil society must strengthen social and economic integration with a view to keeping recruitment networks from taking over that space. It is here, in that space devoid of expectations for personal development, where we must win the battle against terrorism. Likewise, we must be able to overcome the slightest hint of division and resentment, while crafting a narrative of solidarity and remembrance that includes the voices of the victims of terrorism and strengthens the cohesion of our societies.

Investing in education and in our young people; taking an appropriate and comprehensive view of migratory issues, providing the media with tools to combat hate speech — which are ever-present in global public discussions — and fighting stereotypes are undoubtedly essential areas of action. Those are precisely the areas that fall under the remit of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, an instrument for dialogue among cultures and religions, which is supported by the Government of Spain.

The growing tensions regarding nuclear proliferation and weapons of mass destruction are equally troubling. The world cannot afford another arms race. We must make the effort to regain the consensus that has been lost and strengthen the non-proliferation regime. Spain can, of course, be counted upon to participate and commit. The spread of armed conflicts and their changing nature — which is increasingly hybrid and complex — also demand our attention. Spain is firmly committed to strengthening the role of the United Nations in maintaining peace and international security.

We therefore support the measures promoted by the Secretary-General to place prevention and peacebuilding at the centre of the work of the United Nations. We also support his efforts to reform the architecture and management of United Nations peacekeeping operations, to which Spain has been a most active contributor for decades. Over the years, more than 160,000 Spanish troops have served in United Nations peacekeeping operations, demonstrating loyalty and commitment and enjoying the confidence and support of many of the peoples they serve beyond our borders. Consequently, Spain supports the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping and the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.

Nevertheless, conflict prevention and maintaining and consolidating peace are not enough; wherever a conflict breaks out, we must act. Spain supports respect for and enforcement of international humanitarian law, so that no violation goes unpunished. I call upon the justice system to pursue and prosecute those who commit war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. In that connection the efforts of the International Criminal Court are, in our view, irreplaceable.

I call also on the leaders of States and of the international community to protect their civilian populations. I believe it is important to underscore that point before the Assembly. Spain strongly supports the Franco-Mexican initiative to limit the use of the veto power in cases of mass atrocity. Humanitarian disasters such as those in Syria and Iraq remind us of the high price of failing to act in time.

In order for the multilateral system to be effective, we must renovate and reinforce it — a recurring theme at the heart of the Assembly. In so doing, we will be defending everything that we believe in, namely, multilateralism. Spain therefore strongly supports the reform of the United Nations system promoted by the Secretary-General. We have before us the challenge of clearly integrating the pillars of peace, sustainable development and human rights and avoiding the duplications and overlapping that only drag this institution down.

We must win back vital public opinion — something I would like to reflect upon here — and the favour of a global citizenry that has come of age in an atmosphere of growing scepticism about an Organization than can no longer rest on its many past achievements, despite the fact that they are significant and worthy of remembrance. We must now use our ambition in the task of winning over new generations. Our sole source of strength lies in the capacity of the United Nations to project that message to the world. I believe, therefore, that it is fundamental that we serve as role models to be worthy of the example set by those who represent the very best of the United Nations — the staff who risk their lives in conflict zones. I express my sincerest

recognition to all those men and women who work bravely on the ground every day.

The challenge of the disrepute into which politics has fallen is also at stake in the multilateral arena. We must win the battle against those who would spread the shadow of uncertainty and have a single goal, namely, to cast doubt on the role of international organizations such as the United Nations. Spain is a solid ally in that task.

There are two issues that I would like, within the context of the United Nations, to call the Assembly's attention to before concluding.

First is the question of Gibraltar, on which Spain's position is well known — including by the Assembly — and aligned with United Nations doctrine. The United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union means that Gibraltar will also leave the Union. I would like for the Spanish Government to take advantage of this historic occasion to establish a new relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union — which will inevitably involve Spain — to bring prosperity to and benefit the entire region. This includes Gibraltarians, as well as those in the wider area of Campo de Gibraltar.

We are also concerned, of course, by the persistent crisis in the Western Sahara. Spain defends the central role of the United Nations and would like to contribute to the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy to achieve a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that will provide for the self-determination of the people of the Western Sahara. This should be done in the context of arrangements consistent with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

Spain is a fully fledged democracy and, this year, celebrates the fortieth anniversary of our Constitution, which brought democracy to our country. It also ranks high on global indexes that measure the democratic quality of our countries' institutions. Moreover, Spain has made its defence of and commitment to multilateralism a hallmark of our identity, a flag we wave with fervour and conviction whenever we go beyond our borders.

Today, the world faces major threats, just as it did eight decades ago — something that has been remarked upon by many speakers. Cooperative leadership, to which Spain subscribes, demands a renewed commitment to multilateralism. Solutions to global problems can be found only through cooperation between States — that is the firm belief of the Spanish Government and of Spanish society as a whole. Let us ensure that the coming decade represents a victory for consensus and a defeat for those who seek only to hear the echoes of their own voices.

I address the Assembly today in New York, a city that saw the arrival of millions of human beings fleeing from poverty and from political, racial and religious persecution. The immense majority of them were Europeans. Today, on both shores of the North Atlantic, a collective veil of amnesia is being drawn over the memory of what we were and of what we are, namely, sheer diversity.

As the great exiled Spanish poet León Felipe wrote: "It is not a matter of getting there first on your own, but of arriving together, on time". Nothing defines the goals of the United Nations better than the vitality of the 2030 Agenda. It represents this decade's horizon of hope — one that we must strive towards in order to arrive, as the poet said, together and on time, leaving no one behind.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Pedro Sánchez Pérez-Castejón, President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Ms. Ana Brnabić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia.

Ms. Ana Brnabić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Ana Brnabić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, and inviting her to address the Assembly.

Ms. Brnabić (Serbia): First of all, it is indeed a great honour for me to address the Assembly on behalf of the Republic of Serbia. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Her Excellency Ms. Maria Fernanda

Espinosa Garcés on the assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I wish to assure the President that Serbia is deeply committed to advancing, in practice, the topics on this session's agenda, namely, peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies. Having said that, I must also say that it is indeed a pleasure to see that a fellow stateswoman is presiding over this important institution.

My congratulations are also due to His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák for his stewardship of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, as well as to His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General, for his engagement and commitment to promoting important reform processes within the United Nations system.

I would not be saying anything new or original if I were to say that the world of today — be it Europe, the Americas, Asia, Africa or Australia — faces significant and increasing challenges. We are already feeling the grave consequences of climate change, migration and terrorism, the rise of populism and the divisions between us at a time when we need greater convergence. We have all heard that throughout our discussions and from more than one leader during the General Assembly debate.

I will, however, say this. In looking for our way out of this troubled situation and in striving to build a better world for all of us, we all need to start with ourselves and the things we must do ourselves, first and foremost as individuals, then in our countries, in our regions, in our continents and then in the united world that we are. We must once again start bringing the nations of the world together, as we did 70 or so years ago.

Serbia is on the way to rethinking itself as a prosperous, dynamic, creative, innovative, open society within a united Europe that is whole, free and at peace. I am often asked — when others are leaving European Union (EU), when so many express doubts regarding the prospect of a united Europe — why would joining the EU be the principal strategic goal?

I have often asked myself the same thing. In life, I believe that when we are not sure of the answer, we must go back to basics, clear our heads of the daily clutter, forget political misconceptions and spins, and think of basic values. That, I believe, is where we find our answers. The basic value of the European Union, much like the basic value of the United Nations, is peace. It is not the economy, nor trade, nor a bigger market. It is peace. All of the other things and much, much more came, and will always come, as a spill-over effect of peace.

The European Union was a peace project, and it is a successful one. We want and we need to be part of it, so that there is sustainable peace and, consequently, stability and prosperity in the Balkans — that troubled region of the world that used to be known as the "powder keg" of Europe.

I am extremely proud of what Serbia has been able to achieve in the past four years. We have built macroeconomic stability and proved ourselves to be a responsible and reliable partner. Our economic activity has intensified, unemployment has more than halved compared to just four years ago, and we are seeing speedy recovery. Today, Serbia is one of the countries experiencing the highest economic growth in Europe, characterized by a substantial and ever-greater influx of foreign investment.

We have embarked on a comprehensive public administration reform with one simple goal: greater focus on citizens. We remind our Administration — all of us — on a daily basis that we are there to serve, not to be served. We are also working on strengthening the rule of law through judicial reforms, working with the media, establishing honest dialogue with civil-society organizations, building institutions to fight organized crime and corruption and ensuring fairness and justice for all. What we are doing is not easy, and I must say that we are far from always being successful, but it is a path to which we are fully committed.

When talking about things that are not easy to deal with, but for which one needs to take responsibility in order to build peace and prosperity in one's region, one's continent and one's world, I cannot emphasize enough how important regional cooperation and stability is for Serbia. Here, we are talking about a region which has never, ever been stable or very predictable. Nor is it a part of the world known for peace, reason and pragmatism — on the contrary. We have always been known for — but have always been proud of — our excessive emotions, sacrifices, poetic struggles and traditional animosities.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Today, Serbia is trying very hard to leave that behind and grow and become more reasonable, instead of more

emotional; more pragmatic, instead of immersed in myths, a country that is proud of its victories, not of its losses, and a country that is building unexpected friendships in place of traditional animosities. I am proud to say that our President led the way in this internal struggle of ours to grow and mature, to leave the past behind and turn towards a very different future.

First and foremost, I will address here the issue of our Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija, which split even the United Nations down the middle. Fewer than half of States Members of the United Nations have recognized the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo, while more than half — that is, more than 5 billion people across the world — refuse to recognize the illegal secession of Kosovo.

What Serbia has been trying to do in the past year is essentially to close Pandora's box, not reopen it, following the events of 10 years ago when the unilateral declaration of independence was proclaimed by the authorities in Pristina. A number of countries in the world rushed to recognize that unilateral declaration of independence, regardless of international law and standards, regardless of the fact that the declaration was issued only four years after Serbian churches and monasteries — I remind the Assembly that these are World Heritage sites — were looted and burned, and regardless of the fact that the international community has always stated "standards before status" as their mantra. When everyone saw that standards were not on Pristina's agenda, they decided to break their own mantra and simply decide on its status.

Today's Serbia is committed to peace and, if I may say so, to behaving like an adult. We signed the Brussels Agreement more than five years ago and we have implemented it. Pristina signed it but, even five years on, has still not implemented a single word. We will continue insisting on the full implementation of the Brussels Agreement and the establishment of the Community of Serbian Municipalities, but we will remain tolerant and patient.

However difficult, challenging and sometimes hopeless and wasteful the dialogue with Pristina might be, we will stay committed to finding a compromise that will ensure sustainable peace, prosperity and a brighter future for all people in the region. Serbia will continue demonstrating its readiness to compromise, which is far from easy in that we need a counterpart that is politically bold, responsible, committed and trustworthy. That has not been the case so far. I am therefore asking the international community to continue supporting the efforts that Serbia has initiated. To achieve progress in the dialogue, we need the undiluted and consistent support of the international community.

Serbia is committed to working with other nations across the globe to take our common destiny, as many at the United Nations refer to it, into our own hands. We want to claim our accountability towards future generations. We want them to hold us accountable. That is why we are investing so much in peace, understanding and reconciliation in the region. On the other hand, we are equally investing in the future. The key priorities of my Government are youth and education. We need to start teaching our youth how to think, not what to think.

All of us, not just Serbia, need to start investing more than ever before in education to create more innovative, braver, freer-thinking individuals who will then, in turn, create a world that is freer, fairer, and — to be honest — much more fun. The world will value people for who they are and for the values and beliefs they stand for, rather than for where they are from, the colour of their skin or whom they love. Serbia is very fortunate because we have a lot of people — especially young people — who are amongst the best in the world at creative thinking, video-game design, genome research, digital agriculture, animation, physics, machine engineering, mathematics, blockchain, artificial intelligence, big-data analytics, biology, software development and programming.

Our absolutely key priority is to support them and to make sure that we create a system and institutions able to ensure that more of them can realize their full potential. Not only will that be the basis for the future growth of Serbia, but, perhaps more importantly, we hope to be able to empower them so that they will, together with others from all over the world, build a better world for all of us. Without any doubt, our future is digital. As Secretary-General Guterres said at the opening of the general debate, "technology is our ally" (*A/73/PV.6, p. 3*).

I believe that Serbia, although small, can and will play an important role in digital development in the future. That will help us deal with climate change, by far the biggest challenge ahead of us. We must also alleviate hunger by increasing efficiency and by making agriculture smarter, and reduce poverty by ensuring

easy access to finance, even for the poorest and most disadvantaged — those whom we cannot leave behind.

This is how Serbia sees its path towards more peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies in our world. This is us — Serbia —doing our bit for a better world.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Ana Brnabić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Ruhakana Rugunda, Prime Minister of the Republic of Uganda

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Uganda.

Mr. Ruhakana Rugunda, Prime Minister of the Republic of Uganda, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Ruhakana Rugunda, Prime Minister of the Republic of Uganda, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Rugunda (Uganda): I congratulate Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session and assure her of Uganda's full support. We are confident that she will lead the Assembly effectively and successfully. I would also like to express our gratitude to Mr. Miroslav Lajčák for his leadership at the seventy-second session. I also pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, for his personal dedication and commitment to the work of the United Nations.

The theme for the seventy-third session — "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibility for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies" — is very pertinent. Three years ago, in this Hall, we adopted the universal and transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), to guide our efforts over the next 15 years. At the heart of the 2030 Agenda was a pledge to leave no one behind. That meant that the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their targets should be met for everyone, with a particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and furthest behind — people who are indeed often left out.

We in Uganda have devoted a reasonable amount of time and resources to follow through on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and establish links between the SDGs and our national priorities. We are working deliberately to ensure that the SDGs are implemented in an effective and timely manner for the socioeconomic transformation and improvement of our people's livelihoods. To do so, we have integrated 76 per cent of the SDGs into our national development plan for the period 2015-2020, as part of the Uganda Vision 2040.

From our engagements so far, it is evident that the biggest challenge remains the obtaining of adequate financing to implement the 2030 Agenda — an issue that arose clearly in the high-level political forum held in New York in June. We in Uganda are doing our best to mobilize resources, both domestic and external, to implement the SDGs. We are committed to leveraging support into productive areas, including the private sector, which has the potential to boost our economy and thereby contribute additional internally-generated resources to help implement the SDGs. We call upon development partners to fulfil their commitments and extend their support in terms of timely and adequate means for the implementation of the SDGs, as well as to prioritize the special needs of the most vulnerable countries and strengthen partnerships with them.

Our development and transformation cannot take place without peace and security, which are prerequisites for socioeconomic transformation. We should devote our attention to supporting an environment that is peaceful, thereby enabling us to concentrate on growth and development. Today, challenges transcend borders, and no country alone can carry the weight of the world on its shoulders. We must redouble our collective efforts to seek common solutions to pressing regional and global challenges, including conflicts in various parts of the world, transnational organized crime, terrorism and violent extremism.

We must be unwavering in our resolve to combat terrorism, religious extremism and terrorism from groups such as Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaida, which constitute threats to our common security and development. That threat is compounded today, given the possibility of linkages between terrorism and the

proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Those challenges cut across national boundaries and require collective responses.

Uganda remains committed to multilateralism as a means of achieving comprehensive and equitable solutions to global problems and challenges. In order to respond successfully to global crises, threats and challenges, the international community needs an efficient multilateral system. It is for that reason that Uganda has continued to advance the cause for a revitalized, reformed and effective United Nations system. That is critical if we are to make the United Nations more responsive, more efficient and more effective in its support for Member States' efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Uganda supports the comprehensive reform of the Security Council, and our approach is consistent with the African continent's common position, as enunciated in the Ezulwini Consensus. First, African issues dominate the Security Council agenda, and therefore the vast majority of decisions made by the Security Council affect African countries. Secondly, over the past few years, Africa has shown its commitment to conflict prevention, mediation and resolution, as demonstrated by its leadership and response to conflict situations that have developed in the continent over the past few years.

We believe that for a continent with 54 countries, a population of more than 1 billion people and demonstrable political commitment, Africa should have a greater voice in the global political debate, which would increase the legitimacy of the decisions of the Security Council and foster its effectiveness. It is essential that the Council membership, in both the permanent and the non-permanent categories, be equitable and reflect today's geopolitical realities. We therefore support the efforts of Member States to move the intergovernmental negotiations process on Security Council reform forward, and we call for a constructive spirit aimed at realizing the long-awaited reform.

Strengthening South-South cooperation is critical to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Over the 40 years of its existence, South-South cooperation has proved to be a valuable avenue for building capacity and promoting development in developing countries. It has also facilitated cooperation, as manifested in South-South and triangular cooperation. It is our desire that we expand the scope of South-South cooperation to include, among other elements, trade, investment, infrastructure, tourism, peacebuilding and other areas of mutual interest. We look forward to the forthcoming United Nations ministerial conference on South-South cooperation, which is to be held in Buenos Aires and which, we hope, will devote time to considering how to strengthen and further revitalize such cooperation within the context of a Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

The United Nations has the primary responsibility for international peace and security. However, in undertaking that role, it is essential that the Organization support initiatives undertaken by regional and subregional organizations. That partnership should be based on the division of labour, burden-sharing and complementarity, as well as mutual respect.

In Africa, the evidence is that, where such cooperation has taken place, the results have been positive. One example is the cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union on the situation in Somalia, where the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has supported the efforts of the Somali Government to stabilize the country. Uganda has played an active role in those regional initiatives. Since AMISOM's deployment 11 years ago, we have witnessed tremendous progress in Somalia.

The Somali Government, previously based outside the country, has been based in Mogadishu since 2007. International organizations, including the United Nations and diplomatic missions, have also relocated to Mogadishu. More than 80 per cent of the areas dominated by Al-Shabaab have been liberated. The area of piracy and the threat that piracy had caused at sea, threatening international shipping and trade, has been neutralized. Business is thriving, and there are numerous reconstruction activities in many parts of the country. Incidentally, regular elections have also been held.

Those positive developments and Somalia's relative stability would hardly have been possible without the contribution and sacrifice of AMISOM and the Somali security forces. Uganda appreciates the support that the African Union and international partners have given to AMISOM, which was never intended to be in Somalia forever. That is why it is essential that Somalia be supported in providing security for its people. It is crucial that any reduction in the number of AMISOM troops correspond with the strengthening of the Somali security forces. The failure to carefully manage that

process could imperil the political and security gains already made in Somalia.

On South Sudan, Uganda has actively participated in the peace process launched in June 2017 and led by Intergovernmental Authority on Development. We welcome the recently signed and revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. The Agreement outlines guidelines on power sharing, governance and security arrangements, including the settling of boundary disputes, which will be guided by a boundary commission. We call on the international community to support the implementation of the Agreement.

Climate change remains a major challenge and a threat to our efforts to achieve sustainable development. Uganda supported the efforts to reach the new, universally binding Paris Agreement on Climate Change, reached in December 2015. Uganda was one of the first countries to sign and ratify the Agreement last year. We must continue to muster the political will necessary to fully implement the Agreement. There is a need for the enhanced delivery of finance to the most vulnerable countries to support their climate-change mitigation and adaptation measures.

As highlighted in the 2030 Agenda, we can be the first generation to succeed in ending poverty, just as we may be the last generation to have a chance of saving the planet. Let all of us commit ourselves to preventing wars and to promoting peace. Let us build new international relations. Let us reduce inequalities. Let us ensure that no one is left behind. And let us support the primary role of the United Nations as the principal organization for addressing global challenges.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda coincided with the onset of what would become Uganda's single largest refugee influx in its history. As a country, we now host 1.4 million refugees, which is the largest number on the African continent and ranks quite high at the global level.

The presence of large numbers of refugees, mostly arriving unexpectedly and quickly, amplifies the existing vulnerability of host communities. It also places a huge demand on already over-stretched national capacities and resources.

Uganda remains committed to maintaining and promoting asylum space and its refugee model, consistent with the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. We do that because we know that no one chooses to be a refugee. We also understand the critical importance of treating refugees humanely, decently and with dignity. We remain committed to working with national, regional and international actors to address the drivers of displacement and refugees. We are grateful for the solidarity and support that the international community has extended to Uganda thus far. It is our expectation that the new global compact on refugees will provide the much needed predictable and equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing among all Member States.

Lastly, Uganda remains ready to work with the Secretary-General and all Member States to realize a United Nations that is more inclusive, effective and responsive to the needs of the peoples of the world.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Uganda for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ruhakana Rugunda, Prime Minister of the Republic of Uganda, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Lyonpo Tshering Wangchuk, Chief Adviser of the Interim Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bhutan

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Chief Adviser of the Interim Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

Mr. Lyonpo Tshering Wangchuk, Chief Adviser of the Interim Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bhutan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Lyonpo Tshering Wangchuk, Chief Adviser and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Interim Government of the Kingdom of Bhutan, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Wangchuk (Bhutan): I have the honour to convey the greetings of His Majesty the King of Bhutan to the General Assembly and his best wishes for the success of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly.

I also wish to congratulate Her Excellency Mrs. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her being

elected president of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session and to assure her of Bhutan's full support. The Kingdom of Bhutan also commends His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák for the successful completion of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly.

I seek the Assembly's indulgence in allowing me to share Bhutan's observations on some of the key issues before us today. Bhutan welcomes and supports the ambitious and timely agenda of Secretary-General António Guterres to reform the United Nations development system in order to ensure that it is in sync with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and make the United Nations more relevant and fit for purpose. We also welcome the draft implementation plan of the Deputy Secretary-General for the inception of the new Resident Coordinator system. We have taken note of the appeal to Member States for a front-loaded voluntary contribution to the special trust fund to cover the immediate gap of the cost of a reinvigorated resident coordinator system. In that regard, Bhutan will be making a token voluntary contribution to the trust fund.

The reform of the Security Council must go hand in hand with the wider reforms of the United Nations system. It must accommodate the interests and concerns of all Member States, particularly of those that are underrepresented, with a view to reflecting the realities of a vastly changed global environment. The membership of the United Nations has increased fourfold over the years, and the challenges we face today have become far more complex. The institution must therefore adapt, evolve and ensure its relevance and ability to address the growing challenges of our times and fulfil our common aspirations for a more equitable, inclusive and sustainable world.

The reforms of the United Nations that are geared towards implementing the 2030 Agenda must provide the essential impetus needed to galvanize support for progress in areas that have been found to be deficient so that we can meet the goals and targets within the time frame set — that is, by 2030. I am happy to share with the Assembly that Bhutan is well on track towards success in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With the happiness and well-being of our people at the centre of our development efforts, Bhutan's development model of gross national happiness resonates well with the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. The repositioning of sustainable development, which is at the heart of the United Nations principle of leaving no one behind, is also in tandem with Bhutan's national development priorities.

Bhutan presented its voluntary national review on the implementation of the SDG targets at the High-level Political Forum in New York in July this year. The review enabled us to assess the progress made in our endeavours towards the implementation of the targets and achievements. I thank Member States for their keen interest and valuable feedback.

Bhutan, a tiny landlocked country in the Himalayas, started its planned development only in 1961. Under the visionary leadership of our monarchs, the industry of our people and the generous assistance from our development partners, Bhutan today is poised to graduate from the least developed countries (LDCs) category. We successfully completed our second triennial review of the Committee for Development Policy in March and have been recommended for graduation in 2023. On behalf of the Royal Government, I would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to all our development partners for their friendship, generosity and support over the years.

While we have achieved two of the three thresholds for eligibility to graduate from the least development country category, we have, for two successive triennials, not been able to reach the economic vulnerability index threshold. Bhutan continues to face serious challenges in terms of its narrow economic base and vulnerability to natural disasters. The economic and structural impediments to growth are also reported in the vulnerability profile of Bhutan produced by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

Bhutan looks forward to undertaking its graduation from LDC status in a sustainable manner by building productive capacity and economic resilience so as to ensure that there is no rolling back of hard-earned development gains. The pace of graduation must be able to absorb the withdrawal of international support measures. A smooth transition is therefore critical in order to ensure that graduation is sustainable and does not disrupt ongoing development plans and processes. The forthcoming twelfth five-year national development plan, the plan for the period 2018 to 2023, is critical, as it is Bhutan's final plan as an LDC and will serve as our transition strategy for graduation. Efforts during that period will focus on consolidating past progress and addressing the remaining last-mile challenges, so as to build a strong foundation for a

vibrant, resilient and sustainable economy aimed at achieving the SDGs. The Secretary-General's 2018 report on the progress towards the SDGs (E/2018/64) underscored that the LDCs remain far below many of the SDG targets. Ultimately, the success of the 2030 Agenda, with its promise of leaving no one behind, hinges on the performance achieved by the LDCs.

Climate change resulting from global warming and human activity is a serious threat not only to humankind, but also to sustainable development. Action is needed at the international, regional, national and local levels to combat that menace. The impacts of climate change affect poorer countries and people disproportionately, as they are not able to adapt or deal with its impacts. Since mitigating climate change means reducing greenhouse-gas emissions, which are caused by the consumption of energy in all economic and household activities, it affects everyone and is tied to economic and energy-security issues. The ever-increasing environmental pressures of climate change, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, soil degradation, air and water pollution, among others, have far-reaching economic and social consequences that contribute to poverty and growing social inequalities. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development rightly provides a unique opportunity to ensure that sustainable development is based on the rule of law, with a focus on the environmental rule of law as central to sustainable development.

Planet Earth cannot and must not be the monopoly of Homo sapiens. It is the abode of all sentient beings. The Buddhist tenet associated with the conservation and protection of the five elements of our planet will remain as our single hope for survival and refuge for posterity. Natural disasters, such as the recent hurricanes and typhoons that have struck the United States, the Philippines, China and Japan and the devastating flood in Kerala, are not isolated incidents. How many more like them do we need? How many more experts do we need to convince us that natural disasters are aggravated by climate change? I believe that the devastation and destruction from extreme weather conditions alone cost the world approximately $330 billion in 2017. Climate change also threatens to push 100 million people into extreme poverty by 2030. Climate-change refugees on a large scale will certainly become a reality. We must therefore act now and ensure at all costs that international support to tackle climate change, mobilized through the landmark Paris Agreement, does not waver. It is the international community's moral responsibility to the millions of people around the world, especially those in the developing world who are disproportionately affected.

Bhutan has also been affected by extreme weather events, with increasingly frequent natural disasters such as glacial-lake outburst floods, flash floods, windstorms and landslides. They have all had a serious impact on the assets and livelihood of our people and our hard-earned development gains. Bhutan's leadership in sustainable development and environmental stewardship has been recognized globally. We are fortunate that past investments in environmental conservation are reaping climate dividends. Our 72.6 per cent forest cover not only serves as a carbon sink for greenhouse-gas emissions, it also provides valuable ecosystem services such as clean water for drinking, agriculture and hydropower generation. Bhutan remains committed to upholding its 2009 commitment to remaining carbon-neutral and reaffirms its pledge to fulfil its commitments to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Although Bhutan is a small developing country, with a population of little more than half a million, since becoming a Member in 1971 we have always worked constructively with other Member States to realize the noble objectives of the United Nations. Among other things, Bhutan remains fully committed to the cause of international peace and security, one of the key mandates and objectives of the United Nations. Bhutan joined the fraternity of troop- and police-contributing countries in 2014 so as to be able to play a meaningful role in maintaining international peace and security, in testimony to our commitment to sharing that burden with other Member States. Since then, Bhutan has been working to gradually broaden and deepen its engagement in United Nations peacekeeping operations. I am happy to inform the Assembly that Bhutan became the first country to sign the Rapid Deployment Level agreement with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in December 2017. We have also pledged to provide an integrated formed police unit, and we stand ready to deploy a contingent whenever the United Nations calls on us to do so.

In 2008, Bhutan transitioned from a benevolent absolute monarchy to a democratic constitutional monarchy through a meaningful, deliberate and purposeful progression. The democratic changes in Bhutan evolved through an internal process, without external pressure or revolution. With the adoption of

the Constitution in 2008, our monarchs have devolved the responsibilities of safeguarding our sovereignty and security to the Bhutanese people. Since then we have witnessed two elected Governments. The second Government's term ended in August and the third set of parliamentary elections are now under way. The primary round of elections just concluded on 15 September, and the general round will be held on 18 October. We expect to have the next Government in place by early November.

In the past decade, our monarchs and our people have established a strong foundation for a functional, vibrant and intelligent democracy within the tapestry of constitutionalism and the rule of law. As we look to the future, Bhutan will continue working with Member States to ensure that the United Nations continues to play a key role in promoting peace, security and solidarity. In that regard, I would like to conclude with a quote from our beloved King, His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck.

> "There cannot be enduring peace, prosperity, equality and brotherhood in this world if our aims are so separate and divergent; if we do not accept that, in the end, we are people, all alike, sharing the Earth among ourselves and also with other sentient beings, all of whom have an equal role and stake in the state of this planet and its players".

I wish the General Assembly every success at its seventy-third session.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Chief Adviser of the Interim Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bhutan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Lyonpo Tshering Wangchuk, Chief Adviser of the Interim Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bhutan, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ismael Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

Mr. Ahmed (Mauritania) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it is my pleasure to congratulate Mrs. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session and to wish her every success in her work. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to Mr. Miroslav Lajčák for the remarkable effectiveness and professionalism with which he led the General Assembly at its previous session. I would be remiss if I did not also commend Secretary-General António Guterres for his great efforts and noble endeavours to reform and steer our Organization in the service of international peace and security. And I want to offer my heartfelt and sincere condolences on the passing of former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who was known for his honesty, compassion and noble spirit. I had the honour to work closely with him on several issues, particularly the situation in Syria.

As we meet today under this one roof, our peoples look forward to achieving their equitable and legitimate right to peace, development and a life of dignity. They are also trying to build a cohesive and integrated international system capable of confronting the challenges that threaten the existence and survival of human life, such as hunger, disease, epidemics, terrorism, wars, poverty, scarce resources, natural disasters and a lack of incentives for growth. Mauritania is confident that the noble values that underpin the foundation of this Organization can still build a world of understanding, peace, and prosperity.

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania, in hosting the thirty-first African Union Summit in Nouakchott on 2 and 3 July under the theme "Winning the war on corruption, a sustained course on the path for the transformation of Africa", sought to contribute to formulating a comprehensive vision aimed at addressing the challenges posed by corruption, with the goal of freeing our African peoples from that heinous problem. Mauritania has accomplished much in its fight against corruption, adopting a series of measures and procedures aimed at reducing it. We have mobilized our oversight institutions and adopted transparency in all financial transactions. We have modernized and developed our tax-collection system, in addition to updating its methods and systems of payment through the introduction this year of a fiscal reform programme that has led to a change in the base national currency.

Under the leadership of His Excellency President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, we have adopted an integrated economic policy aimed at ensuring the welfare and prosperity of our citizens. We have built roads, airports and seaports, and our Government has made basic services available, including drinking water and electrical power. We have implemented reforms

designed to speed up growth throughout our economic, mining and oil sectors. We have also enacted a law encouraging investments and have established a free economic zone in the city of Nouadhibou. We expect our economic growth to exceed 4 per cent this year.

In order to mitigate the negative impact of climate change on economic growth and life in general, Mauritania has adopted a national policy designed to utilize renewable sources of energy. We are also working on combating sand invasion and have focused on environmental efforts, including the creation of nature reserves. Mauritania has ratified all the international conventions relating to climate change and, as is well known, Nouakchott hosts the headquarters of the African Agency of the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative.

We are aware that achieving justice and equity for all members of society and distributing wealth equitably constitute one of the main foundations of a modern State. Mauritania has therefore enacted fundamental reforms in its legal system with the aim of entrenching the concept of the independence of the judiciary and making it known to litigants. We uphold freedom of the press as a strategic choice in our efforts to achieve and enhance democracy. We recently established a public fund to support the private press and streamline the electronic media, and we are working to launch a radio and television broadcasting service. We have abolished prison sentences for issues pertaining to press cases and made public media outlets accessible to all political actors. All of those achievements have come thanks to honest political will, aimed at spreading a spirit of freedom and democracy, and they have enabled our country to maintain a leading rank in terms of freedom of the press at the international level. According to Reporters Without Borders, for years Mauritania has repeatedly ranked first in the Arab world in terms of freedom of the press and of expression, a fact that was also confirmed in the most recent report of the United Nations Development Programme.

Mauritania has worked to encourage international accord and has adopted a permanent policy of openness. In that regard, many preparatory meetings and consultations were held with various factions of the opposition in order to reach agreement, culminating in an open political dialogue between the majority and the opposition in 2011, followed by another comprehensive dialogue, between 29 September and 20 October 2016, between the parties of the majority and certain parties of the opposition, as well as large sections of civil society and independent personalities. These resulted in constitutional amendments that were adopted by referendum on 5 August 2017, which has enhanced our democracy and the rule of law, as well as the rationalization of public resources.

The elections held on 1 and 15 September provided an opportunity for the Mauritanian people to choose their representatives on the legislative, municipal, and local councils. In establishing the concept of decentralization, for the first time in its history my country also witnessed the election of local councils tasked with developing various approaches to engaging local groups when dealing with their affairs. The elections were held under the supervision of an independent electoral commission in an atmosphere of peace, security, transparency and fairness, as testified to by politicians, international observers from the African Union and civil-society representatives. All politicians participated in those elections, and women occupied a significant position in terms of candidatures as well as the number of seats won. Indeed, a woman is now chairing the local council of the Nouakchott district. Those results show the progress that women have made in recent elections, thanks to national policies that have enabled them to participate at all levels of decision-making, including in political, military and judicial positions. There is also a quota for allocating seats to women in all elected positions.

Our national leadership also attaches special importance to young people and has established a multidimensional strategy based on comprehensive approaches that deal with all aspects of interest to young people in the areas of politics, intellectual achievement, education, vocational training and employment. We have also established a higher council for youth and a national employment agency.

Human rights are a very important part of our national policies and are embodied in our continuing efforts to entrench those rights, improve prison conditions, protect prisoners from torture and combat the abuse of women and children, as well as definitively eliminating any remnants of slavery. In that regard, our national legislation classified slavery as a crime against humanity as part of our 2012 constitutional amendments. The legal system has also been bolstered by a group of laws and regulations that adopt new approaches, including establishing ad hoc courts that specialize in cases related to the remnants of slavery throughout

the country. In March 2014 we issued a road map that includes the implementation of 29 recommendations on combating slavery and its remnants, efforts that have been praised by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery. My Government has established a social-welfare agency working to combat poverty and remnants of slavery. Its tasks include helping our most vulnerable groups by offering health care and educational services and funding income-generating projects.

This year our country, which supported the South African people in their struggle against the policies of apartheid, welcomed the Nelson Mandela Peace Summit (see A/73/PV.4 and 5) honouring the great role of the late Nelson Mandela. In that regard, I would like to recall that we honoured the late leader and advocate Madiba by naming one of our capital's largest streets after him. The African Union Summit also recently held events in Nouakchott specially dedicated to honouring his centenary, with a view to recalling the values and ideals for which he fought.

Mauritania's unique geographic position, together with its Arab and African affiliations, gives it a particular responsibility with regard to the security, economic and human systems in the subregion. We have fully assumed that responsibility and played a pivotal role in establishing the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5). Mauritania has worked practically to help form the Joint Force of the G-5 for the Sahel, which is currently fighting terrorist organizations in the region. In that connection, Mauritania is working to achieve harmony and amity in the subregion by adopting a firm policy of good-neighbourliness and disengagement from any conflict. We are also closely following the Western Sahara issue, and we support United Nations efforts to reach a settlement that is acceptable to the relevant parties and contributes to achieving economic integration between the countries of the Arab Maghreb Union.

The question of Palestine is extremely important to Mauritania and is reflected in our firm position on the issue. We have consistently called for a viable equitable solution based on the relevant Arab and international terms of reference and capable of leading to the establishment of an independent State of Palestine with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

With regard to the Libyan issue, we support the United Nations efforts and other complementary tracks, including the work of the African Union Ad Hoc High-level Committee on Libya, the Quartet and Libya's neighbours.

Regarding the situation in Syria, we underscore the need to strive seriously for a political solution through a comprehensive national dialogue that preserves Syria's unity and independence, as well as the dignity of its people and their right to live in security and peace. As for brotherly Yemen, we reiterate our support for the legitimate leadership of President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour. We call for an end to division and the adoption of a peaceful solution based on the three terms of reference. We also support United Nations efforts aimed at reaching a political solution to that crisis. We affirm our support to the Government of Somalia in restoring security and stability in its territory and once again condemn all terrorist activities that target vital centres in Somalia.

Concerning the Rohingya Muslims, we reiterate our firm condemnation of the killings and displacement inflicted on that minority group, and call on the international community to shoulder its responsibilities in putting an end to that oppressed people's suffering.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm Mauritania's respect for all of its international commitments. We honour the multilateral international order and the principles of the United Nations, which seek to establish a world of security and stability where people live in prosperity and peace. Mauritania stands ready to work with its partners to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Aurelia Frick, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Justice and Culture of the Principality of Liechtenstein.

Ms. Frick (Liechtenstein): It is a great joy and personal satisfaction for me to see a woman presiding over the General Assembly. This is the tenth time that I have had the honour to speak in this historic Hall, and it is the first time in all those years that a woman has held the highest office here at the General Assembly. I salute her leadership, and we will support her. But it is also disappointing to see that the United Nations, which should be a trailblazer on the path of women's empowerment, so frequently misses opportunities to make appointments that resonate outside this building. I am therefore all the more grateful to Secretary-General Guterres for his commitment to gender parity. His resolve has illustrated that that goal can be achieved

relatively quickly. We have yet to realize full gender equality in practice back home in Liechtenstein, and we will continue to look to the United Nations to set examples that guide us on our own path.

The United Nations is the most important peace project the world has ever seen. It has shaped the way we have lived together for more than seven decades. It was created out of the belief that the world could not afford another armed confrontation between its most powerful States, with its devastating consequences for everybody. It was created on the basis of a collective system for the maintenance of international peace and security, based on common values and common purposes.

The early years of the work of the United Nations illustrated the enthusiasm with which States seized the opportunity they had created for themselves. There was a strong focus on the most painful open wounds caused by the Second World War. The true dimensions of the horror of the Holocaust gradually became public knowledge, not least through the trials in Nuremberg, and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was adopted as a result. Influenced by the vivid impressions of the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in its very first resolution (resolution 1(I)) the General Assembly set a goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons. We are still far from achieving it, and the path so far has been rough. But we have finally charted a way forward by adopting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons last year. I congratulate the 19 countries that have already ratified the Treaty, and we will do our best to follow suit.

The United Nations has also been a place where we have developed human rights standards, the rules that guide the relationship between the State and the human person, individually and collectively. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights began that inspiring trajectory. Eleanor Roosevelt, one of my personal role models, made a decisive contribution to its conclusion. Seventy years later, there can be no question that every individual on this planet is entitled to enjoy all the rights reflected in the Declaration. An impressive number of groundbreaking treaties have been built on its foundations, a very proud record. More than any other, the area of human rights reflects the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, written on behalf of the peoples, not their Governments.

Development became another key mission in this building. In fact, for many of its Members, the United Nations is the world's most important platform in that respect. That is also an agenda that we shaped together. We agreed on the right to development and made it clear that development, human rights and peace and security belong together. That effort has been crowned by the Sustainable Development Goals, which will guide our work until 2030. They offer a historic opportunity, and we owe it to our children not to miss it.

The challenge of climate change is a perfect illustration of the indispensability of the United Nations. We ourselves have created a threat to our sheer existence as the human race and as individuals. The threat knows no national borders and makes no distinctions. We are all equally affected, and we can only overcome it together. Our very survival is at stake, and yet we are significantly behind in terms of what must be done. The Secretary-General is right to sound the alarm. That is one of his responsibilities. It is up to us, all of us, to act.

All of this can lead to only one conclusion. We need more of the United Nations, not less. We need a United Nations that is more effective, cooperative and dynamic, more in tune with the times we live in, and yet our efforts have been distracted. We see tendencies to revert to a paradigm that resulted in enormous suffering in the past and would certainly be disastrous today. Wilful blindness, a disregard for realities, denial of the facts and appeals to fear and resentment are recipes for disaster. We have witnessed a downward spiral in that conversation. It has been rapid and today has led us to a point where the fundamentals of what we have created together are under attack.

The Charter is our main reference point as we reflect on the most pressing challenges of the day. One paragraph from the Preamble stands out this year:

> "We the peoples of the United Nations determined ... to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained".

Today more than ever we are challenged in our determination to do just that. Today we can no longer take it for granted that those conditions exist. The questioning of international agreements and norms in the areas of trade, climate change, disarmament, migration and human rights has one common thread. It not only undermines the contents of those agreements, it is an attack on the rules-based order as such. It runs

contrary to the pledge that we are all committed to under the Charter, that is, to respecting our obligations under international law.

In the course of this debate, speakers have expressed their overwhelming support for the international rules-based order. That gives us hope and inspiration to tackle the challenges we are facing. Let us be clear. We have to work harder to make the United Nations fit for purpose. Most worryingly, we still have a Security Council that is least functional when it is most needed. While addressing our weaknesses, we must also make better use of our strengths, particularly the power of the Assembly. It has the legal and political authority to build institutions and set policies that are game-changers.

One such institution is the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. We were proud to lead the way in its creation two years ago. Born out of frustration over a deadlock in the Security Council, it has quickly become a symbol of what the Assembly can achieve and a beacon of hope for Syria. At this critical moment in the Syrian conflict, our resolve to ensure accountability for the crimes committed will shape the country's future.

We are confronted by a very different situation, with a similar massive accountability challenge, in the atrocities committed against the Rohingya population by the authorities in Myanmar, which are shocking to all of us. There can be no voluntary return for the hundreds of thousands forcibly displaced into Bangladesh unless we can ensure a credible accountability process. We now have a direct path to justice, because the International Criminal Court (ICC) has ruled that it can exercise jurisdiction over the crime of forced deportation. That creates a new and expeditious policy option for the 123 States among us that have joined the Rome Statute, in that we can now come together and refer the situation in Cox's Bazar to the ICC. I hope that conversation will take place here in New York over the next few weeks.

From Syria to Myanmar to Venezuela, the International Criminal Court is at the centre of the effort to fight impunity. Its creation 20 years ago was perhaps the most important advance in the recent history of international law. It fulfilled a vision that had eluded us for a century. Today it is an institution that is imperfect but, more importantly, indispensable. It is a telling fact that at a time when there seems to be a general questioning of the rules-based order, the ICC finds itself under particular attack from various sides. We need that Court more than ever, and more than ever, we must be ready to stand up for it.

The issue of modern slavery and human trafficking is particularly disturbing to the Liechtenstein Government. Seventy years ago, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we agreed that no one should be held in slavery or servitude. Today more than 40 million people, predominantly women and girls, live in such conditions. That is unacceptable. We have joined forces with our partners from Australia and the United Nations University and created the Financial Sector Commission on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. Its task is to design a response so that actors in the financial sector can help eliminate modern slavery and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice. I am proud to serve as its co-convener, together with Nobel Peace laureate Muhammad Yunus. We are under no illusions about the magnitude of the task, but we are encouraged that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has created such a strong impetus for finally eliminating slavery, and we stand ready to take that opportunity, together with everyone here.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Lejeune Mbella Mbella, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cameroon.

Mr. Mbella Mbella (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of His Excellency Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, I would first like to offer the President our sincere and warm congratulations on her election to lead the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. This is a historic moment, given that she is only the fourth woman to preside over the Assembly in the 73 years of the existence of the United Nations. I am sure that her diplomatic background and knowledge of the United Nations system will guarantee her success in the performance of her duties. I would also like to express my gratitude to her predecessor, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, who distinguished himself through his contribution to advancing the values of the Organization we share. I would also like to congratulate Secretary-General António Guterres on his commitment to accomplishing the delicate tasks assigned to him by the Charter of the United Nations and on his efforts to carry out reforms aimed at achieving a more effective United Nations that is focused on people and development.

My delegation welcomes the theme that the President chose for this session, namely, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies". Persistent hotbeds of tension, in particular in Africa and the Near and Middle East, as well as the emergence of new issues such as terrorism, violent extremism, migration, natural disasters and climate change, to name but a few, threaten the foundations of our civilization and bring to the forefront the issue of the ability of the United Nations to provide adequate responses to contemporary problems. The expanding scope of global public goods now makes it essential that the Organization be capable of being, in the words of the Charter, a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of those common ends.

The growing complexity of the problems of our time, as well as the unprecedented interdependence of nations and peoples, require collective action and global solutions. The United Nations is today the best reflection and embodiment of multilateralism, which is, more than ever before, the most appropriate way to respond to the challenges facing humankind. That is the very essence of our Organization, which, it should be recalled, was created to save succeeding generations from war, promote social progress and create better living conditions for all peoples.

To that end, my country believes that the role and future of the United Nations continue to depend on the willingness of Member States to strengthen its legitimacy, democratization and representativeness, so as not to leave anyone behind. That necessarily involves reforms of its organs, including the Security Council. In that respect, we cannot continue to marginalize Africa, which remains the only continent that does not have a permanent seat in the main body in charge of international peace and security.

The role and future of the United Nations also depend on the equitable treatment of its three pillars: international peace and security, development and human rights. We must not lose sight of the fact that human beings, whose development depends on living conditions, are at the heart of the Organization's objectives. The complex relationship between peace, development and human rights allows us to consider the eradication of poverty and the improvement of people's living conditions as the surest means of achieving lasting peace, adequate protection of the individual and viable democracy. As President Paul Biya stated several years ago, democracy without development is a delusion that gives rise to terrible disappointments.

In recent months, the news has been dominated in particular by moving images of men, women and children who lost their lives trying to cross seas and borders in search of a better future. We cannot remain insensitive to that issue. In the framework of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, which will be adopted during the intergovernmental conference scheduled for December in Morocco, we must acknowledge the fact that poverty, unemployment, weakening purchasing power and, in short, uncertain futures constitute so many violations of human dignity and, consequently, so many breaches of the peace, so many causes of political instability, so many drivers of migration, which, if nothing is done, will be neither safe nor orderly nor regular. The question of migratory flows should therefore draw the attention of our collective conscience and remind us of the importance of effective solidarity and shared prosperity.

With regard to collective security, we remain convinced that the settlement of international or domestic disputes must be carried out in conformity with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. In addition, we must redouble our efforts to achieve disarmament. In that regard, Cameroon believes, however, that the attention and resources devoted to the issue of nuclear and chemical weapons should not overshadow the centrality of the problem posed by small arms and light weapons on the international agenda. It should be noted that, according to available statistics, more than 90 per cent of the victims of war around the world, and particularly in Africa, are killed by that type of weapon. In addition, small arms and light weapons are increasingly falling into the hands of terrorist groups such as the Islamic State, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, Boko Haram and others.

Cameroon is pleased to have hosted, in Yaoundé from 11 to 13 June, the first Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly. Under the leadership of my country, which holds the biennial presidency of that first Conference, the Central African States have unreservedly committed to combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in all States parties to the Kinshasa Convention by mobilizing adequate operational — both institutional and logistical — resources. The Central African States

intend to strengthen, among themselves and with other partners, including the United Nations, cooperation, coordination, networking and the interoperability of resources for the effective implementation of the Kinshasa Convention to combat the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons. Cameroon knows that it can count on the support of the United Nations and the Secretary-General.

With regard to the global economic situation, despite signs of recovery, growth in many regions remains below the levels needed for rapid progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is therefore necessary to increase the net international financial flows to developing countries, which have declined in recent years. However, we should not deceive ourselves — honouring official development assistance commitments alone will not make it possible to meet all the funding needs for achieving the SDGs. The means of implementation set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development should, therefore, be fully mobilized at all levels.

Here I would emphasize the need to change the economic structure of most African economies, which focus economic activity on the extractive industries and the commodity-production sectors. Owing to the limited impact of other sectors, such production patterns generate few jobs and promote inequality, while sowing the seeds of social unrest. The solution lies, therefore, in transforming the African economies, particularly through industrialization and economic diversification. It is therefore more appropriate than ever to provide more support to African countries in order to help them to reduce their debt burden, improve their production capacities and, lastly, help their products gain access to global markets under more favourable conditions.

With regard to the specific case of international trade, Africa still faces the threat of protectionism, to which, in our view, the most appropriate solution is the establishment of a universal multilateral trading system based on open, transparent, predictable, inclusive, non-discriminatory and fair rules, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. Cameroon is aware of its responsibilities in the current context. The challenge of achieving collective prosperity in my country means adopting ambitious and realistic development policies and programmes and instilling democratic values in our sociopolitical life, as well as including good governance and the fight against corruption on our priority agenda.

On the economic front more specifically, my country has resolutely pursued the development of productive, structural and promising sectors, without which we cannot envisage improving the living conditions of the population. That is the objective of our long-term vision, whose goal, in line with the political agenda of President Biya, is to make Cameroon an emerging country by 2035.

On the environmental front, my country, which was among the first States to ratify the Paris Agreement, remains firmly committed to preserving biodiversity. Therefore, in order to protect the climatic balance of the planet, Cameroon, a country in the Congo Basin and the second most forested country in Africa, took the courageous decision not to make full use of its forests. In that regard, it is necessary to find urgent and appropriate solutions so as to reconcile the environmental protection initiatives adopted by Cameroon in the interest of all and the legitimate aspirations of its people for their well-being.

In the same vein, Cameroon would like to reiterate the need for a number of urgent actions to preserve Lake Chad, which today has been reduced by more than 90 per cent of its initial surface area. It is an issue of survival for the local communities, whose livelihoods depend on preserving that body of water. Cameroon would like to take this opportunity to express its sincere gratitude to the international donors that, in a spirit of solidarity, pledged a total of €1.5 billion for that cause at the donor conference held in early September.

With regard to the democratic process in my country, we have improved our electoral system not only by strengthening electoral mechanisms but also through legislative and regulatory measures designed to ensure a high participation rate in upcoming electoral contests, the next being the presidential election scheduled for 7 October this year. The strengthening of democratic culture in Cameroon is an inevitable process despite the security challenges that we face.

Thanks to the sacrifices of the entire Cameroonian nation, combined with efforts coordinated with our neighbours in the Lake Chad basin and the support of our international partners, the capacity of the Boko Haram terrorist group to do harm has been significantly reduced, although it is necessary to remain mobilized until its complete eradication.

Regarding the sociopolitical situation in the North-West and South-West regions, our Government remains determined to stabilize it. The corporatist demands of the teachers' and lawyers' unions, which are at the root of that situation, have continued to be the subject of negotiations with those socioprofessional categories. Solutions, which have sometimes gone beyond the problems raised, have been found.

Unfortunately — and Cameroon wishes to state this from this rostrum — individuals without faith or law thought it necessary to turn those socioprofessional concerns into secessionist demands aimed at breaking up the State, going outside constitutional and democratic mechanisms. Having chosen as their modus operandi the perpetration of terrorist acts, armed gangs have burned schools and hospitals and violated children's right to education by preventing them from going to school and by kidnapping and killing department officials, defence and security officers and indigenous authorities, as well as any citizen who does not subscribe to their destructive ideology. To date, nearly 100 members of the armed forces of our country have lost their lives without including the many families overwhelmed by those barbaric acts.

The current situation has led to the deterioration of both the economic fabric and the school and health systems of those two regions. That picture is compounded by the fact that people have been displaced within the national territory and towards Nigeria, a neighbouring friendly country. In the light of all this, our Government is working to restore peace and security in both regions, with respect for human rights and the laws and regulations of the Republic. In addition, sensitive to the plight of the populations concerned, the President of the Republic, His Excellency Paul Biya, decided to implement, on 21 June, an emergency humanitarian assistance plan for the people of the two regions with a provisional budget of CFA 12.7 billion. The funds allocated to the plan are being complemented by financing from a remarkable outpouring of solidarity and generosity from all other regions and segments of the Cameroonian population.

Cameroon, a former trusteeship territory of the United Nations, invites the Assembly and all States and peoples who are friends of Cameroon and who are committed to peace and justice to support it in mobilizing resources and implementing that humanitarian plan with a view to providing better assistance to those populations. The Government would like to express its gratitude to our partners who, since the launch of that plan, have spontaneously given us their support. In any case, the Government of Cameroon would like to reaffirm its dedication to peace and stability and its resolve to take into account the concerns of the people. We have shown on several occasions, and we reiterate today, our openness to dialogue, but with strict respect for the institutions and laws of the Republic.

Strong measures have already been taken to address the situation that I mentioned. I would like to note, for example, the creation of the National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism and a fully fledged ministry in charge of decentralization. The aim is to accelerate a shift towards the management of local affairs by the concerned populations themselves.

Ms. Ioannou (Cyprus), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Government of Cameroon wishes to reiterate its unwavering commitment to ensuring the security of persons and property, as well as to protecting its national unity and integrity. In that regard, the Government welcomes the rejection by the entire population of Cameroon, and especially by the people of those two regions, of any attempt at secession.

In conclusion, Cameroon, a country whose independence was led and supervised by the United Nations, would like to reaffirm in this Hall not only its faith in our Organization, but also its commitment to peace and stability, without which no development is possible.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Augustine Phillip Mahiga, Minister for Foreign Affairs, East Africa, Regional and International Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): I wish to congratulate the President on her well-deserved election to preside over the work of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. Her election to that prestigious position as the fourth woman in that post in the history of the Organization and the first from Latin America is not only a unique accolade to her person, but also a testimony bestowed on her by the States Members of the United Nations. In that regard, Tanzania pledges its full support to her and her entire Office.

I also wish to pay special tribute to her predecessor, His Excellency Miroslav Lajčák, for his successful

leadership and commitment to the General Assembly during his presidency at the previous session. We wish him well in his future endeavours. In the same manner, I commend Secretary-General António Guterres for his tireless efforts to steer the work of our Organization, especially in implementing the challenging reforms that are under way under his stewardship.

I am greatly honoured to address the Assembly on behalf of my President, His Excellency Mr. John Pombe Joseph Magufuli, who could not join his colleagues in the Assembly owing to the tragic ferry accident that claimed the lives of more than 200 Tanzanians and left many others injured. We appreciate the support of the international community during this difficult moment. May the souls of the departed rest in eternal peace.

Before I proceed, let me express the condolences of the Government of Tanzania to the United Nations community and the entire world on the demise of Mr. Kofi Annan, an outstanding humanitarian and a defender and advocate of multilateralism. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family, relatives and friends. May his soul rest in eternal peace.

This year's theme, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies", is very captivating and timely in reinforcing global governance to ensure the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. That impetus from the United Nations comes at a time when multilateralism is eroding and needs to be rescued with collective and determined efforts.

Today, we are living in a world where most societies are neither peaceful and equitable nor sustainable. The world is still facing many violent conflicts and wars resulting in a massive loss of lives, and the threat of terrorism, the destruction of the environment, refugee influxes, displaced persons and global migration, hunger and poverty persist in many parts of the world. Addressing those challenges requires a collective visionary leadership and governance.

Unfortunately, all those miseries are mainly human-made and could be prevented if we resolved to take collective measures. Continued and meaningful co-operation among Member States is a prerequisite in addressing all of the challenges confronting the world. Through such a platform, we could accentuate the relevance of this body to all nations and the people. Furthermore, we could shape global policies and norms to respond to the various needs of our diverse cultures and societies. A call for the United Nations to be relevant to all people is therefore timely; and indeed, it is in accordance with the Organization's purposes and principles as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

It is in facing those global challenges that multilateralism at all levels of response, and especially through the United Nations and its institutions, becomes essential to ensuring peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies. It is an undeniable fact that every sovereign State in the international system seeks to maximize its national interests and the well-being of its citizens. However, acting alone and in isolation minimizes the potential for realizing the desired optimal results. Globalization and the intricate web of relations that have subsequently emerged globally render a multilateral approach to issues of national, regional and international concern essential and unavoidable.

Unfortunately, the world is witnessing multilateral institutions and principles being put to the test. For example, the World Trade Organization, which has been the pillar and yardstick of the rule-based and fair global trading system, is being now undermined. Climate change and global warming, which are already wreaking havoc on lives and property in all regions regardless of national borders, can be addressed effectively only through multilateral approaches. Above all, it is the post-Second World War multilateral edifice and institutions that have given us the peace we witness today, albeit an imperfect one. We should be seeking to improve the shortcomings in the multilateral system that we have created for ourselves and for a better world, rather than walking away from it.

Tanzania is unreservedly committed to multilateralism in pursuit of its national interests. It is also through unmitigated multilateralism that we will be able to address critical global challenges, such as terrorism, extremism, radicalism, climate change, restrictive trade policies, trafficking in persons, drug abuse, pandemic diseases, absolute and abject poverty, immigration dynamics and weapons of mass destruction, just to mention a few. We are encouraged by the united chorus from the General Assembly in defence of multilateralism and in defence of the purposes and principles of the United Nations, which bind all of us together.

We have seen diplomatic engagement work successfully to bring adversaries to a round table to

address their differences peacefully. Tanzania wishes to endorse the continuous use of diplomatic means and round-table negotiations to address conflicts between and among nations. It is in that regard that Tanzania, as a peaceful and stable country, has assisted and witnessed the value of brokering peace. Tanzania welcomes the recent talks between the United States and North Korea on the Korean nuclear deal, which paved the way for the recent signing of an agreement between North Korea and the Republic of Korea. We hope that deal and others that have followed the same pattern will yield the anticipated positive outcomes sooner rather than later, including resolving the long outstanding humanitarian issues in the Korean peninsula. Those are some of the good examples of successful outcomes resulting from diplomatic engagements around the world. All those efforts have confirmed the value of dialogue in resolving and preventing conflicts.

Reforms are necessary both for continuity and for change. For the past decades, the Assembly has continuously been discussing reforms of the United Nations and its institutions so that it can respond effectively to the current global economic, political, social and changing security dynamics. That is the way to make our Organization alive and relevant. Currently, the reforms are focusing on the United Nations development system, management, and peace and security. My delegation strongly believes that the reforms will be objective and balanced.

Tanzania supports the reforms of the United Nations, especially those relating to the Security Council, and reiterates the position of Africa as contained in the Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte Declaration, which we endorse. In addition, Tanzania urges the international community to make the process transparent, inclusive and democratic. All countries, poor and rich, must have equal participation, and their voices and positions must be heard and taken seriously. After many years of almost stalemated negotiations on Security Council reforms, it is necessary to move the process forward, but in a manner that will preserve the interests and positions of all parties concerned in a transparent consultative manner.

We ought to remind ourselves that the credibility of the United Nations rests on a fully representative and responsive Security Council. The Council is what it is today and the reforms are not advancing well because of the veto. If we are to make meaningful reforms, we should, first of all and foremost, be bold enough to decide on the future use of the veto. In that respect, my delegation wishes to stress that issues relating to the veto and the expansion of the membership and categories should be addressed as a package and not in isolation.

Over the years, and with the support of the international community and development partners, Tanzania has successfully implemented various national development plans that have significantly contributed to the reduction of poverty. Furthermore, we are proud to have incorporated the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into our national development agenda in order to accelerate economic growth and eradicate poverty. Drawing on experiences from the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, it is apparent that the implementation of the SDGs requires adequate, sustainable and predictable funding, especially to assist least developed countries like mine. Thus, the mobilization of long-term innovative public and private financing is key to the realization of those Goals.

Tanzania has embarked on systematic legal and administrative reforms of mechanisms that have been hampering resource mobilization and accountability. The Government has embarked on a relentless fight against corruption and public-service incompetence in order to increase accountability and transparency. The Government has undertaken stringent measures to fight drug and human trafficking, illicit trade in ivory and violent extremism. As expected, those measures have generated determined resistance on the part of vested economic interests and criminal elements. In response, the Government has needed to take appropriate countermeasures that have sometimes been misunderstood as being too restrictive. Despite those challenges, Tanzania will continue to respect the rule of law, good governance, democracy and human rights, as enshrined in our Constitution.

Notwithstanding the ongoing efforts to mobilize domestic resources, developing countries continue to experience global systemic issues relating to unfair tax regimes and illicit financial flows, which contribute to capital flight and deny those countries their rightful income. We call upon the international community to redouble its efforts to tackle those systemic issues by, among other things, establishing an intergovernmental tax body under the United Nations to address the evasion and avoidance of taxes. That, in turn, will put more resources at our disposal for implementing the SDGs.

Tanzania is among the top troop-contributing countries to United Nations peacekeeping missions, and we have significantly contributed to the restoration of global peace and stability in many parts of the world. We currently have 2,687 troops serving under the United Nations flag in six different countries.

Regrettably, Tanzania's participation in peacekeeping operations has not been without incident. Some of our peacekeepers have been attacked and even killed. The December 2017 attack in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was the worst in the past 25 years of United Nations peacekeeping history. We thank the Secretary-General and all Member States that extended their condolences to Tanzania and the families, friends and relatives of the deceased. Our pain was eased by those who stood with Tanzania during those difficult days. May the souls of the departed rest in eternal peace.

We welcome the support of the United Nations, and we commend the Secretary-General for promptly forming a special investigation team that established the causes of the attack and determined the actions to be taken to prevent such hostile and cowardly incidents in future. We are also gratified that the recommendations of the investigation report will feature prominently in the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, which Tanzania supports. Tanzania looks forward to the implementation of those recommendations.

I wish to remind the Assembly of the historic role played by Tanzania in hosting and providing sanctuary and protection to refugees from Central and Southern Africa for decades. We have done so for humanitarian reasons, but also because of the internationally agreed principles to which we are signatory with regard to the admission of asylum-seekers and the protection of refugees. We are currently hosting more than 330,000 refugees, mainly from Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Over the decades of hosting refugees, Tanzania has provided local integration and citizenship to more than 150,000 refugees.

Apart from providing sanctuary to refugees, we have also been involved in initiatives to resolve regional conflicts in the Great Lakes region, which have the potential to increase refugee influxes into our country. In addition, as of September, Tanzania has also assisted in the voluntary repatriation of more than 46,000 Burundian refugees. The repatriation exercise was conducted transparently and inclusively in collaboration with the Burundian authorities, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other relevant development partners. Nevertheless, some misguided Burundian exiles have criticized the exercise as involuntary. The truth is that the bottlenecks and constraints in the implementation of the Tripartite Agreement are due to a lack of resources and to mixed progress in the political and security situation in Burundi.

In that connection, Tanzania appeals to the international community to facilitate and support the ongoing voluntary repatriation of the remaining Burundian refugees while consultations continue between Tanzania, Burundi and the UNHCR. It is equally important to present a realistic assessment of the evolving political and security situation inside Burundi in order to enable the refugees to make informed and objective decisions on returning to various parts of the country.

The people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo continue to face challenges to peace, security and stability. The country has continuously been destabilized by warring factions and warlords, who have wreaked havoc, leading to political instability in some parts of the country, especially in the eastern part of the country. The situation has not only denied the Democratic Republic of the Congo the opportunity to develop its country and people, but has also undermined and threatened regional peace and security. However, current efforts to address the protracted impasse are seeing some progress with regard to the Government's commitment to holding the long-awaited general elections later this year. The stability of the Democratic Republic of the Congo would not only contribute to addressing the refugee problem, but would also improve the prospects for regional trade and investment, as well as the economic prosperity of the region. There can be no better assurance of the future, progress in and status of the political situation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo than the statement delivered two days ago from this rostrum by President Joseph Kabila Kabange (see A/73/PV.7). To that end, it is necessary to continue with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the Intervention Brigade, in which Tanzania is a participant, in the eastern part of the country, until the elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are concluded.

In 2015, many world leaders who had gathered here welcomed the historic and momentous decision taken by the United States of America and the Republic of Cuba to restore diplomatic relations. For most of us, that was the beginning of a harmonious coexistence with high hopes and expectations. However, as time has progressed, we feel and see that minimum efforts have been made to meet such hopes and expectations, which ultimately should lead to the lifting the embargo that has condemned the people of Cuba for many years. We hope that through the power of reason and the diplomatic means that led to the re-establishment of ties, the embargo on Cuba will be totally lifted and that a new dawn of cooperation will follow, not only between the two countries but in the entire region of Latin America and the Caribbean.

The issue of self-determination for Western Sahara has taken a new direction with Morocco re-joining the African Union (AU), where it is a member of the Peace and Security Council. There is a renewed opportunity for the United Nations and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to work with the newly established AU troika mechanism on Western Sahara to address the issue of that area. Tanzania supports that initiative and hopes that the process will gather momentum and reach a new status soon.

On the question of Palestine, Tanzania reiterates its position on resolving the conflict between Israel and Palestine through the two-State solution. We believe that Palestine has the right to enjoy its independence and peace, just as Israel is entitled to peace and security, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. It is our belief that it is within the creative and resourceful ability of Israel and the determination of the Palestinian people to reach a peaceful solution that will permit Israel and Palestine to coexist in peace and security.

In conclusion, I reiterate Tanzania's commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations and to multilateralism. The Government of His Excellency John Magufuli stands ready to participate constructively in the search for peaceful solutions to conflicts and to contribute to the United Nations mandate for conflict prevention and peacekeeping. Above all, we look to this Organization to continue championing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and to support Tanzania's own efforts to achieve those Goals as it heads towards a middle-income designation and furthers its ambition of industrialization.

May God bless us all and may God bless the United Nations.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Djibouti.

Mr. Youssouf (Djibouti) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to offer our warm congratulations to the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. Her many exceptional qualities bolster our deep conviction that she will successfully carry out her mission in the service of the nations of the world. Djibouti welcomes her election as President of the Assembly at this session in more ways than one. She is the fourth woman to hold this position in 73 years. We assure her of my country's support in carrying out her mandate.

I would also like to commend the dynamism, faith and commitment of her predecessor, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák. I also congratulate Secretary-General António Guterres on his many initiatives to advance the Organization's agenda and the ambitious United Nations reform plan designed and developed with the support of Member States. Even if there is a consensus on the general need for reforms to make our Organization more effective, it has not always been easy to convince Members and overcome the resistance and burdens often faced by this type of major undertaking.

Despite improvements in a number of indicators, such as life expectancy, living standards and a drastic reduction in the global rate of extreme poverty, the observation we made last year in the General Assembly (see A/72/PV.19) remains valid. Even if some parts of the world are experiencing growth, the risks of diminished prospects loom large. Prospects for economic expansion exacerbate the risk of increased tensions and trade disputes. Gross inequalities persist, and the major geopolitical upheavals under way are generating growing uncertainty. Similarly, the persistence and increased complexity of some conflicts is a major concern.

The number of people leaving their country because their lives are in danger is on the rise. More and more people are leaving in search of a better life and taking to the sea, sometimes risking their lives in the process. That migratory flow has unwittingly contributed to the emergence of a bitter political debate in many northern countries. Such fierce debates, if seen without

a dose of critical distance, could challenge the feeling of belonging to a common humanity bound by the common responsibility to build a better world together.

The crisis of multilateralism that we are witnessing, the protectionist tendencies that we are observing, the palpable temptation of retreating into nationalism and sometimes even autism are the consequences of this emerging ideology. It posits that we must rely only on ourselves, that we can only rely on ourselves, thus contradicting the philosophical wisdom of Rimbaud: "I is another". Hence the importance of this session's theme, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies", as an instrument to guide our collective reflection. All of our proposals and contributions could be compiled into a manifesto to renew and restore the faith and confidence that our peoples have in the United Nations system and its ability to respond to their problems.

Djibouti welcomes the fact that in response to each of the perils mentioned above, the international community has mobilized and formulated responses and developed action plans through particularly well-conducted intergovernmental processes. Among those successes, I note the adoption of the reforms undertaken by the Secretary-General in some key areas — the repositioning of the United Nations development system in the implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for humankind; management reform; and the reform of the peace and security architecture.

We also note the finalization of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration through an open, transparent and inclusive process. It is set to be adopted in Marrakesh in December.

Similarly, the finalization of the global compact on refugees, which will be submitted to the General Assembly for its consideration during this session, is a major development. Refugees are particularly vulnerable. Since the United Nations is unable to address, in a sustainable manner, the causes of the conflicts that led to their exile, it must provide an adequate response to their needs.

Efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development encourage and motivate us. The current momentum to adopt and integrate the Sustainable Development Goals into national planning and institutional initiatives should continue with renewed energy. The aim should be to deepen reflection and exchanges, and to establish participatory frameworks and new partnership models. We must redirect investments to the improvement of data collection on sustainable development and statistics on gender, health, education and the environment. Djibouti is pleased to be able to present its first voluntary review soon and considers this opportunity for introspection beneficial.

We also welcome the Secretary-General's strategy to mobilize increased resources for financing the 2030 Agenda. In that regard, let me stress again that it will be necessary both to think about innovative financing strategies aimed at ensuring an increase in foreign direct investment and to honour development aid commitments.

The greatest threat to the implementation of the transformative agenda that is Agenda 2030 is undoubtedly conflict and violence. Conflicts in several parts of the world continue to increase the death toll, and the nature of the specific challenges they pose will require the sustained attention of the international community. The expansion of terrorism and international organized crime further complicates already fragile situations and requires different responses than those proposed by conventional peace operations. It also sorely tests the diplomatic negotiation tools at our disposal, which we must urgently and thoroughly review.

In contrast to that gloomy picture, the Horn of Africa has seen a series of historic positive developments that are likely to generate peace dividends and lead to reconciliation and economic development. We welcome the rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea, which ended two decades of neither war nor peace and inaugurated a new era of peace, friendship and cooperation between the two countries. The positive repercussions for other inter-State conflicts in the countries of the region have been rapid and, we hope, substantial.

In that regard, I would like to inform the Assembly that the Presidents of Djibouti and Eritrea met on 17 September in Jeddah, under the auspices of His Majesty King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud of Saudi Arabia, and agreed to open a new chapter in relations between the two brotherly countries. At the end of the meeting and thanks to the tireless efforts of the King of Saudi Arabia and the Ethiopian Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed, the Presidents agreed to continue the dialogue with a view to finding a peaceful solution to

the outstanding issues, including the border dispute and the prisoners of war.

We also welcome the Peace Agreement signed between President Salva Kiir of South Sudan and the head of the rebellion on 12 September in Addis Ababa under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. We hope that it can be fully and unconditionally implemented. The South Sudanese people have suffered too much. They deserves peace and the opportunity to build a better future.

We are encouraged by the tremendous progress made by Somalia in building strong institutions and restoring peace, stability and economic growth. Although we recognize the significant progress made, we must work together to identify and combat the actors who seek to block political normalization, particularly the Al-Shabaab terrorist groups, and do all we can to build greater coherence and unity of action between the federal Government and other federal units. We take this opportunity to pay tribute to the troops of the African Union Military Observer Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), whose crucial role has been amply demonstrated on the ground. AMISOM's support of Somali forces is crucial to ensuring that the transfer of security responsibilities can be carried out under the best possible conditions.

The question of Palestine must continue to mobilize the international community. There is no alternative to the two-State solution. Moreover, the issue of Palestinian refugees must also be of concern to us all.

I would be remiss if I did not make mention of the suffering of the Rohingya people, who today are being threatened with ethnic cleansing, as the international community has witnessed. We must pressure the Government of Myanmar to allow the return of the Rohingyan refugees.

The United Nations has made a significant contribution to the efforts to maintain international peace and security. It has played a crucial role in promoting international cooperation among States. It is the responsibility of us all to strengthen its role and to make it a global force.

Djibouti is ready to work alongside the other nations of the world for the creation of a safer, more united and more prosperous world. The stakes are high, and the call is urgent. Long live the nations of the world! Long live the United Nations!

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Workineh Gebeyehu Negewo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Mr. Negewo (Ethiopia): Allow me to start by expressing my warmest congratulations to the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I can assure her of my delegation's fullest support and cooperation in the effective discharge of her responsibilities. Let me also convey my sincere appreciation to her predecessor for his able leadership of the Assembly over the past year.

This year, the United Nations lost one of its icons, someone who rose through the ranks to lead the Organization and who, as the Secretary-General rightly said, tr ly represented what the United Nations is all about. We mourn the loss of this illustrious son of Africa, who left an enduring mark on the world stage, Mr. Kofi Annan.

We are meeting at a time when multilateralism is facing serious challenges, and yet there has never been a time when we needed multilateralism more. That is why this gathering of nations under the umbrella of the United Nations is so important. It remains the only universal Organization whose very ideals of freedom, equality and justice are still as valid today as they were at its inception. As the late Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia stated in his address to the General Assembly in October 1963:

> "The Charter of the United Nations expresses the noblest aspirations of man: the abjuration of force in the settlement of disputes between States; the assurance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion; the safeguarding of international peace and security." (*A/PV.1229, para. 5*)

That remains profoundly true. Let me take this opportunity today to assure the Assembly that Ethiopia, as a founding Member of the United Nations, will continue to adhere to those ideals and to the principles of multilateralism as we face unprecedented challenges and threats to our community of nations.

Ethiopia's contribution to United Nations peacekeeping is second to none. We remain totally committed to that noble endeavour as we reform and adapt to the new and challenging realities of peacekeeping. We fully endorse the Secretary-

General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative and the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations to tackle the challenges peacekeeping faces today.

Six months ago, a peaceful transfer of power took place in Ethiopia. It opened a new chapter in our country's political and social history, offering realistic and genuine possibilities for change that will meet the hopes and expectations of our youthful population. Those changes are in line with the new political and democratic realities that we are implementing and have been welcomed and embraced by Ethiopians across the length and breadth of the country. Creating a just, peaceful, equitable and sustainable society is the vision that we are supporting as we build a new society on the foundations and achievements of the past. I believe that vision is highly appropriate and relevant to our discussion here at this session of the General Assembly and to the theme selected for this general debate.

Ethiopia and its people have frequently shown their resilience and strength in times of adversity. We are quite confident that we will continue to do so. No difficulties are insurmountable. Of course, there are challenges that we continue to encounter in working to ensure that the benefits of economic growth and development are widely shared among all of our people. We are working today to broaden and deepen the necessary reforms in order to promote democratic governance and the rule of law, promote fairness and justice and better financial and economic management, ensure transparency and accountability in our governance, and foster participation in an effective democracy.

In the last six months, we have made every effort to ensure all of that, which, together with our message of forgiveness and reconciliation, strengthens the unity and solidarity of our people. The new Government, led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, is taking a series of measures — opening up the democratic space in every direction, opening up the economy and tackling obstacles to development, such as corruption, human rights violations, and failures of administration and governance. In other words, we continue to respond to the hopes and aspirations of our people. Those reforms have been welcomed across the country and beyond.

We have not confined our efforts to Ethiopia. There is another key historic development in our region. In the last three months, my Prime Minister has embarked upon a significant reconciliation initiative across the Horn of Africa. It is the start of a genuine normalization among the countries of the Horn. Ethiopia and Eritrea have opened a new chapter in their relationship, ending two decades of conflict. We are normalizing relations and charting a future in which our relationship will truly reflect the long-standing ties between our peoples. Somalia and Eritrea have reconciled their differences and have re-established diplomatic relations.

Early this month, we held a trilateral summit involving Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia in Asmara. We Foreign Ministers then visited Djibouti, opening a new phase in relations between Djibouti and Eritrea. The Chairperson of the African Union Commission has rightly called that effort a clear demonstration of the value and effectiveness of the search for African solutions to African problems.

Recently, my Prime Minister and the President of Eritrea signed the Agreement on Peace, Friendship and Comprehensive Cooperation in Jeddah. The Presidents of Eritrea and Djibouti shook hands in Jeddah, thus ending a decade of dispute. In the light of those important and positive developments, it is appropriate and timely that the Security Council now, without delay, seriously consider lifting the sanctions imposed on Eritrea. A few days ago, the South Sudanese parties signed the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan at an Extraordinary Summit of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Addis Ababa. The Agreement offers a real prospect for peace in South Sudan after five years of civil war.

Those are indeed major developments in the Horn of Africa. As the Secretary-General put it, a "powerful wind of hope is blowing across the Horn of Africa." It is a wind that offers a start to the process of unravelling the years of conflict and suspicion across a region that has been one of the most conflict-ridden in Africa. The Horn of Africa is indeed becoming the hope of Africa.

While all those major steps towards silencing the guns in our region are taking place, it is equally important to extend the process to promote a framework for regional economic integration to fight poverty. Moreover, regional economic cooperation will make a real contribution to help do away with violence and war, as well as promote deeper regional and continental integration in line with the African Union Agenda 2063.

In the light of the challenges that we face together as a region, the choice we have is very clear — we must work together for the collective destiny of our people. The historical, cultural, social and linguistic links that bind our peoples form a proper basis for striving for common prosperity. We believe that regional integration, which benefits all countries of the Horn, is our only viable option for meaningful development. We are already seeing dividends through regional integration projects. We are now working to accelerate such efforts, building on what we have already achieved.

Finally, let me underline that Ethiopia will always remain firmly committed to making every possible effort to forge peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies in our subregion and our continent, Africa. As a non-permanent member of the Security Council, we have been doing everything we can to support that important and noble cause, and we will continue to do so in the spirit of and with a commitment to nurturing peace, security and stability for the common good of our countries.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Robert Dussey, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Regional Integration of the Togolese Republic.

Mr. Dussey (Togo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I extend the warm congratulations of His Excellency Mr. Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé, President of the Togolese Republic, to the President of the General Assembly on her well-deserved election to preside over the Assembly at its seventy-third session. I also assure her of the support of my country, Togo.

At the same time, I would like to pay a well-deserved tribute to Mr. Miroslav Lajčák for the masterful leadership he showed during his term as President of the General Assembly at the previous session. I am also particularly pleased to commend the sense of human affairs and practical wisdom of the Secretary-General António Guterres. We appreciate his clearly expressed commitment and daily work in support of the principles and values of the Organization, which we share.

I would like to welcome the relevance of the choice of the theme for this session, which draws the attention of all of us to a challenge that is essential, because it is fundamental: decentralizing the exercise of responsibilities at the United Nations level in order to bring the Organization into line with the realities of a plural and multipolar world. Taking that into account will undoubtedly broaden the basis of the legitimacy and effectiveness of the United Nations in the world.

United Nations reform is less a wish than a logical necessity. The world has evolved; new problems and actors have emerged; the planet itself is now suffering; violent extremism and terrorism threaten the world; and new forms of responsibility have emerged. As a centre for the exercise of collective responsibility on a global scale, the United Nations must update the way in which it is organized and functions if it is to effectively play its role as an institution in the service of the human community. The time has come, in the words of the philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn, for a paradigm shift.

I would like to reiterate my country's support for and commitment to the Secretary-General's initiative for the far-reaching reform of the Organization, which has the merit of being based on an open and inclusive process that takes into account the three main institutional pillars of the United Nations system: peace and security, development and the management structure. The reform initiative is focused on restructuring the peace and security pillar, which will help to make the institution more pragmatic and effective.

The link between peace, security and development is well established. Without peace and security, there can be no sustainable development, nor development of any kind nor the building of resilient and sustainable societies. The new United Nations peace and security architecture must therefore be intrinsically linked to the broader development pillar, which includes respect for and promotion of human rights and the strengthening of humanitarian action. The ongoing reform should reposition the United Nations development system to adapt it to the new requirements associated with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in order ultimately to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and push back the boundaries of objective poverty and domestic and global inequality.

The United Nations must do more to help address the world's lack of development. One more step in the war on the development deficit will help our world to lift entire segments of the world's population out of the misery of their position and condition, and restore their autonomy and power of control over their own lives. The Organization's new development system must accommodate the need to build a world in which each country enjoys sustained, inclusive and sustainable

economic growth. The aim is to reorient the system with significant adjustments focusing on skills, leadership, coordination and accountability mechanisms.

This new restructuring of development mechanisms must also aim at the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The challenges of climate change are vital, and our response must not wait. Obviously, in our response to the challenges of climate change, a significant place must be given to the promotion of partnerships and innovative mechanisms for financing development, in accordance with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

With regard to the management pillar of the ongoing reform, we are pleased to note that the major changes envisaged correspond to the need to improve the Organization's internal management methods by simplifying procedures, decentralizing action and investing in people in order to better meet the requirements of sustainable development and for building a peaceful world. Investing in people means taking a stand for development and peace in the world. In short, the reform we are talking about today aims to make the United Nations more dynamic and capable. The current global challenges call for the strengthening of the operational capabilities of the United Nations.

The challenges facing Africa today are immense. Our continent continues to face new forms of crises and difficulties. Unfortunately, Africa is now home to hotbeds of terrorism in some of its regions and countries, where people who legitimately aspire to peace of mind face daily acts of barbarism that feed on violent extremism, religious ignorance and intolerance, and ideological fanaticism.

Poverty persists in Africa, and African populations are seeking well-being. The consequences of climate change are terrible, and migration is decimating a significant part of Africa's young people and making them vulnerable. The current challenges relating to the difficult issue of migration and the human tragedies it generates appeal to our conscience and sense of collective responsibility and call for appropriate and sustainable responses. In that regard, the Togolese Government urges all stakeholders to give priority to the participatory approach and the logic of consensus in the ongoing negotiation process and to work with determination towards the adoption, at the Marrakech Conference on 10 and 11 December 2018, of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.

The General Assembly will certainly agree with me that the emergence of the peaceful, equitable, prosperous and sustainable societies that we all want cannot become a tangible reality unless priority is given to effective, innovative and mutually beneficial partnership mechanisms. To that end, the United Nations should, in order to play its full coordinating role, rely more on regional and subregional organizations in the fields of international peace and security and development.

In the case of Africa, where development problems are acute, Governments have become aware of the need to accelerate the regional integration process in order to pool development efforts and poverty-reduction strategies, as recommended under the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals. Several initiatives are currently under way to further strengthen that integration. In that regard, Togo welcomes the appointment of its President, His Excellency Mr. Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé, by his peers to lead the project to establish the Single African Air Transport Market, which is an important instrument for the continent's economic integration. The effort to mobilize States to sign that solemn undertaking is ongoing, with a view to creating such a market.

On the issue of international peace and security, our priority today is to strengthen international cooperation in peacekeeping operations and in the fight against terrorism. We must redouble our efforts to end conflicts, especially in Africa and many other parts of the world. This is an opportunity to pay tribute to, and acknowledge the true value of, the leading role that the United Nations has always played in the world through its various peacekeeping missions, the majority of which, unfortunately, involve the African continent.

It is my pleasure to welcome in passing the Peace Agreement reached between the parties to the crisis in South Sudan and to plead for the implementation of the commitments made for a political and definitive solution to the ongoing conflict in that country. As a member of the African Union Peace and Security Council, we believe that further cooperation between United Nations peacekeeping structures and the operational mechanisms of the African Union and the subregions is an urgent necessity.

The resolution adopted by the General Assembly last June during the biennial review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy reminds us of that imperative (resolution 72/284). In that regard, the Togolese Government welcomes the holding of the

first Joint Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States on Peace, Security, Stability and the Fight against Terrorism and Violent Extremism, in Lomé, on 30 July, during Togo's term as Chairman-in-Office of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS. That meeting, the first of its kind on the continent, organized at the initiative of the two subregions, made it possible to create a framework for exchanges on preventive and operational conditions for the preservation and maintenance of a lasting peace in the common space of the two communities.

In order for the United Nations to assert its leadership and play its role effectively and fully as a guarantor of international peace and stability, it is essential to continue and complete the Security Council reform process. The reform of the Organization will be complete only if it also involves the reform of the Security Council. The new approach is based on a shared vision of responsibilities and recommends that solutions to international peace and security problems should be the prerogative of all States Members of the United Nations. In that way, the expanded Security Council would, in the interest of equitable representation and the involvement of all regions of the world, contribute to making the Council more effective in fulfilling its important mission. Although my country welcomes the consultations held throughout this year, which have enabled States and groups to make proposals and enrich the discussions, there is reason to wonder about the outcome of the negotiation process, which has obviously been stalled for 28 years.

At the national level, Togo's action is part of the shared commitment of States Members of the United Nations to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Government's main objective is to make Togo a middle-income country that is economically, socially and democratically stable and open to the world's demands. The recently adopted national development programme, which is consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, ECOWAS Vision 2020 and the African Union's Agenda 2063, aims to structurally transform the national economy for sustainable, inclusive and resilient growth. Togo is working to improve the quality of life of its citizens and to contribute, alongside the United Nations, to reducing pockets of insecurity in our changing world. In that regard, I would like to express my gratitude to the development partners that have already come forward to support my country in that ambitious and burdensome task.

Sustainable development also promotes the development of human rights. The establishment of a fair and free society depends on the building of a peaceful and secure world. In that regard, Togo is resolutely pursuing its constitutional and institutional reform process with a view to consolidating democratic gains and guaranteeing rights and freedoms for all. In that perspective, the Government has launched efforts to find a definitive and lasting solution to the political misunderstandings that we have experienced in recent months, by continuing to bring together the political class and civil society to share views on the common challenges and objectives of peace and social and human progress.

In the spirit of regional solidarity, ECOWAS has been helping Togo to overcome its political difficulties. That noble regional organization, through the facilitation of Ghana and Guinea, has helped the Togolese political class agree on the joint composition of the Independent National Electoral Commission with a view to the scheduled holding of legislative elections on 20 December 2018.

The late former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, who passed away last month and to whom we pay a well-deserved and grateful tribute for his admirable commitment to the service of peace in the world, said on 24 September 2001: "The only route that offers any hope of a better future for all humanity is that of cooperation and partnership" (*A/56/PV.7, p. 2*). Together we will be able to build the world that we want to leave to future generations.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first statement and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Mamdouhi (Islamic Republic of Iran): In the exercise of its right of reply, my delegation wishes to respond to the statement made today by the representative of the Israeli regime.

The Israeli regime has a long history of pursuing opportunistic policies aimed at misleading others.

The intention behind such behaviour, which consists of psychological projection, is to divert attention from the regime's inhuman and savage actions taken against Palestinians and other Arab nations. Those actions have sowed instability and anger in the region, have caused many crises and have brought much suffering. The Israeli regime continues to be the leading spoiler of peace and stability in the volatile region that is the Middle East.

The Israeli showman never misses an opportunity to launch accusations against Iran in particular. The fallacies in his statement confirm his pathological tendency to tell monstrous lies and distort reality. He just wants to distract attention from his regime's inherent cruelty and brutality against Palestinians. He wants to cover up the killing of defenceless women and innocent children. He wants to hide the fact that, for decades, millions of Palestinians have been taken hostage by Israel. He wants to mask Israel's face as the last apartheid regime in the world. He wants to conceal the reality that his is the only regime in the world that openly practices racism, having recently legalized it.

Israel, the warden of the world's biggest open prison, Gaza, dares to stand here once again and make a statement filled with despicable lies. No matter how many slurs, lies and fabrications the regime puts forward, it cannot hide Israel's criminal nature. Theirs is a dreadfully regressive and undemocratic regime led by a corrupt leader who pretends to be progressive and democratic.

The Israeli Prime Minister's ethnoreligious fantasies are indeed very similar to those of other extremists, in particular Da'esh. Israel's absurd claim that it is a democracy echoes similar assertions that the Nazis used to make before dragging the world towards destruction. A racist and supremacist democracy that crushes the dreams of the true owners of Palestine for self-determination is a mockery of democracy. It is the tyranny of racists.

In fact, Israel is the enemy of democracy in the Middle East. It hates democracy. Indeed, if democracy were to prevail, there would be no room for Israel in the Middle East. The Israeli regime rejects the purposes and principles of the United Nations in its practices and policies, defies almost all United Nations resolutions and misuses the Assembly to mislead others. For example, we should ask how many Security Council resolutions have been violated by Israel. It has violated some 300 resolutions, on topics ranging from weapons of mass destruction to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

On Israeli-Palestinian issues alone, Israel has violated 225 Security Council resolutions. The latest of those resolutions was resolution 2334 (2016), which called for an end to Israeli settlement-building. At the Council meeting on 20 September, almost all of its members — with the exception, of course, of Israel's great patron, the United States — urged Israel to refrain from violating and defying that resolution (see S/PV.8358). Israel holds the record for ignoring the greatest number of Security Council resolutions of any country, which symbolically makes it an international outlaw. In order to be able to do so, it relies mainly on the United States, which has used its veto power a total of 44 times to shield Israel from Security Council draft resolutions against its practices.

Exhibiting some photographs from Google Street View today, the Israeli showman claimed that he had discovered new nuclear facilities in Iran. This is yet another fabrication, which is not surprising, since lying is in his DNA. Instead of such fabrications, he should stop threatening Iran with nuclear annihilation, as he did recently. Such an inflammatory statement against a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) constitutes a serious violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Given that the Israeli regime has attacked two peaceful nuclear facilities in our region in the past, the Security Council should strongly condemn the threats by that regime to use nuclear weapons against Iran.

Israel should also be compelled to abandon its nuclear weapons, accede to the NPT without delay or preconditions, and place all of its nuclear facilities under the full-scope safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The regime should stop its destabilizing conduct, its frequent incitements directed against countries in the region, and its regular violation of Syrian and Lebanese airspace. It should also put an end to its air strikes against various targets in Syria. Those air strikes effectively serve as air support for terrorist groups.

Let us be altogether clear: we are watching the Israelis' criminal behaviour whenever and wherever they commit it. The time when Israel could strike its neighbours with impunity is past.

The meeting rose at 11.10 p.m.